

Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund Scheme Guidance 2025-26

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Please read the scheme notes carefully. Incorrectly submitted applications will not be considered.

1 Purpose of Grant

- 1.1 The Fund was established according to the terms of the Will of Sir Aurel Stein, FBA, to commemorate his friendship with Sir Thomas Arnold, FBA, for **'the encouragement of research on the antiquities or historical geography or early history or arts of those parts of Asia which come within the sphere of the ancient civilisations of India, China, and Iran, including Central Asia**, or of one or more of these and so that special consideration shall be paid, if possible, to research of this character bearing upon the territories comprised in the present Kingdom of Afghanistan including the region of ancient Bactria and in the north-western frontier region of India'.
- 1.2 Research should be 'so far as possible by means of exploratory work', and applicants **must be British or Hungarian**.
- 1.3 **Applicants should be of postdoctoral status or have comparable experience. Postgraduate students are not eligible to apply.**
- 1.4 In general, **awards do not exceed £3,500**.
- 1.5 Awards are tenable for up to **24 months**.
- 1.6 All applications should demonstrate that Academy funds are sought for a clearly defined, discrete piece of research, which will have an identifiable outcome on completion of the Academy-funded component of the project.

2 Level and Duration of Award

- 2.1 **Grants do not normally exceed £3,500**, but in exceptional circumstances bids for up to £5,000 may be considered, for research taking place over a maximum period of 24 months. Applicants should not apply for expenditure that will take place over more than 24 months.
- 2.2 Please note that it may not be possible to fund all applicants to the full value requested.
- 2.3 There is no bar to reapplying for further funding, providing the conditions of award relating to the preceding grant have been satisfactorily fulfilled. Please note, however, that once a pilot project has been successfully completed further applications relating to the main project may be more appropriately directed elsewhere for funding (ESRC/AHRC). There is no guarantee that a re-application will be successful, so applicants with longer-term projects in mind should ensure that their research is so designed that a single phase will have an appropriate and worthwhile outcome, even if further phases are not funded.

3 Eligibility

3.1 Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Grants are available for advanced research, at postdoctoral or equivalent level, in the study of **the antiquities or historical geography or early history or arts of those parts of Asia which come within the sphere of the ancient civilisations of India, China, and Iran, including Central Asia.**
- Applicants must be either British or Hungarian subjects. Co-applicants may be from any nationality.
- Applicants should be of postdoctoral status or have equivalent experience.
- Awards will not be made retrospectively: this means that the work for which support is requested **must not** have commenced before the award is announced. Please note the earliest point at which research can commence.

4 Deadline for applications and timeline

4.1 **Applications must be submitted by 7 January 2026 at 5pm (GMT).**

Applicants will not be allowed to make any changes to their applications after the 7 January 2026.

4.2 Please note the earliest point at which research can commence, and to help regulate the flow of applications, the latest starting date also. The Academy is inviting proposals in this round with the closing date noted below.

Closing date	7 January 2026 (5pm GMT)
Research to commence	No earlier than 1 April 2026 and no later than 31 December 2026
Results notified by	31 March 2026

- 4.3 Only one call for proposals is issued for the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund each year – the next call will not be issued until Winter 2026.
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5 Eligible Costs

- 5.1 Funds may be sought to cover the direct expenses incurred in planning, conducting, and developing the research (please see annex 1 below) including:

- project planning and development costs (cost of travel for discussion in the UK and overseas)
- travel and maintenance
- research assistance (based in UK or abroad)
- consumables
- specialist software
- costs of interpreters in the field

- 5.2 Bids for the cost of childcare may be considered if the parent/carer is conducting research away from home and it is not possible to make alternative arrangements.
- 5.3 These costs can also be requested through our [Additional Needs Fund](#) if the costs sought would otherwise exceed the maximum grant. The costs of normal regular childcare whilst at home are **not** eligible for support.
- 5.4 In addition to childcare costs, the Additional Needs Fund can also be used to address access and support need requirements of applicants and award holders. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.5 Consumables include the purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms, etc, and any other minor items that will be used up during the course of the project.
- 5.6 Applicants may apply for short-term consultancy or salary costs for expert staff, or short periods of research assistance. Provided they are central to the research process and an adequate case is made, the costs of preparing illustrations (including photography, acquisition of images, draughtsmanship and cartography or other bespoke illustrative material) may be considered.
- 5.7 The cost of reproduction rights for text or images may be considered provided there is a contract for publication in place.
- 5.8 Costs associated with deposit of digital material in an appropriately accessible repository may be considered.
- 5.9 Costs related to conservation may be considered provided there is a clear research context to the work that falls within the remit of the Academy. Incidental translation expenses may be considered.
- 5.10 **If an application is purely for technical or practical work with no research objective, it is not eligible for funding.**
- 5.11 The following items are **not currently eligible** for funding (applicants registered with special needs may consult the Academy about possible exceptions):
- Institutional overheads, or any element that should properly be ascribed to institutional overheads
 - Computer hardware including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras, etc
 - Books and other permanent resources
 - The preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, nor any other editorial task.
 - Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc).
 - Costs of publication in electronic media.

- Payment to the principal researcher(s) in lieu of salary, or for personal maintenance at home
- Replacement teaching costs
- Travel and maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours or to write up the results of research
- Attendance at or organisation of conferences either in the UK or abroad to disseminate the results of research. (There are separate schemes for conferences, as distinct from meetings or workshops planned to advance a programme of research. Please see the [Guide to Awards](#)). Events convened for the purpose of disseminating results of the research in progress are not eligible for funding under this scheme.

6 Independent Scholars

- 6.1 An independent scholar is a researcher who chooses to apply independently from an institution. This can be for a variety of reasons, such as they are unaffiliated from a research institution (potentially as they are retired or an early career scholar), or if they are on a fixed term contract which will end before the project does.
- 6.2 Independent scholars should complete the form as standard and select 'independent scholar' as their primary organisation on the form. They should still click the 'submit for organisational approval' button as the Academy acts as the research office in such cases. The Grants team will perform checks of the application at this stage, with two possible outcomes. If no amendments are required, we will provide 'organisational' approval. If they are required, the applicant will be emailed advising them on what needs to be rectified and will return the application to them. Once complete, the applicant will be able to resubmit to the Academy.
- 6.3 It is strongly recommended that independent scholars submit their applications at least two days before the deadline to allow sufficient time to make any amendments if necessary. They can submit right up to the 5pm deadline but will not be able to make amendments if submitted late.
- 6.4 If selected for funding, independent scholars will receive the grant funds directly and will be asked to provide their bank details. It is the responsibility of the scholar to keep receipts for purchases which will need to be sent to the grants team at the end of the award period along with a final expenditure statement.

7 Application to Multiple British Academy Schemes

- 7.1 Please note that only one British Academy Grant may be held, or applied for, at any one time.
- 7.2 **An application cannot be accepted if there is a report outstanding on any previous such research grant awarded by the Academy to the Principle Investigator or Co-Applicant(s) named in the current proposal. Failure to follow this guidance will result in your application being withdrawn from this round of competition.**
- 7.3 **Duplicate applications for the same purpose to more than one Academy scheme will not be accepted.**
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8 Nominated Referee

- 8.1 Applicants are required to nominate one referee and ensure that the supporting statement from their chosen referee is submitted on the [British Academy Flexi-Grant® Grant Management System](#) (GMS) by the application submission deadline.
- 8.2 Please note that the reference must be received before you can formally submit the application for approval, and you are strongly advised to ensure that your referee submits the reference **well in advance of the formal applicant deadline** for this round of competition, which will be **5pm (UK time) on 7 January 2026. Please note this deadline is final.**
- 8.3 Your referee should be familiar with your project and able to comment on its significance and feasibility, and on your abilities.
- 8.4 The reference may be supplied by a scholar based outside the UK if you wish, but the reference must be given in English.
- 8.5 **Your referee must be drawn from outside your own employing institution and that of your Co-Applicant, if relevant.**
- 8.6 Before listing your referee on your application form, you should seek permission from them that they are happy to provide this by the applicant deadline. **It is essential that you enter the correct email address for your referee otherwise your referee will not receive the automated messages delivered from the British Academy GMS.** It is also recommended that your referee first registers on Flex-Grant before the invitation to act as reference is sent.

An application cannot be considered for an award unless the proposal and reference have been submitted on time.

- 8.7 We strongly advise that you complete your application as early as possible to allow your referee enough time to provide their reference in the system. An application cannot be considered for an award unless the proposal and reference have been submitted on time.
- 8.8 Please note that references must be provided through the GMS, they cannot be provided as an email attachment nor sent by post in hard copy. Any references received after the deadline, or outside of the system, or by another academic at the same institution as you or a co-applicant(s) will not be accepted, and your application will be withdrawn from this competition.
- 8.9 All references are kept confidential from the applicant, and they will not be able to view them.

9 Assessment Criteria

- 9.1 Assessors will evaluate the proposal on the basis of its academic merit, taking into account its originality, its relationship to, and the volume of, research already in the field, the scholarly importance of the research proposed, the suitability of the methodology, the feasibility of the research programme, the specificity of the scheme of research, the presentation, and intended outcomes; and its suitability for support from the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund.
- 9.2 Assessors will evaluate the ability of the investigator(s) to undertake the proposed research, taking into account their track record in terms of publication, their academic age and stage of career. Backlogs of publication (including any reasons given by applicants) may be taken into account in assessing the current proposal.
- 9.3 The primary assessment of quality will be based on the specific research objective of the proposal, and whether the methodology and research programme outlined are likely to lead to successful achievement of the objective. The details of how the objective will be achieved - whether through research visits, use of research assistance, workshops, or any combination of eligible activities/costs - will be assessed only in relation to each individual application.
- 9.4 No preference will be shown between individual or collaborative modes of research. There are no quotas for different types of application, and no comparisons will be made across applications on the grounds of their operational and financial specifications. For projects involving partners from other countries, assessors may take into account the availability of partner funding: in cases where partner funding is likely to be scarce, assessors may give priority to those projects which are likely to contribute to capacity building and lead to benefits for the wider scholarly community.
- 9.5 No individual may be a Co-Applicant on more than two projects under this call (nor may a Lead be additionally a Co-Applicant on more than one other project).
- 9.6 Assessors may take into account evidence of language competence where the understanding of material in a foreign language is crucial to the achievement of the research objective.
- 9.7 Comparative judgements about value for money may be taken into account at the final stage of assessment. Any special case made for endangered or emerging fields may be taken into account at the final stage of assessment.

- 9.8 **NB. The Administration of the scheme is undertaken solely by the British Academy and all aspects of the application process, assessment process and award management are undertaken by the Academy.**
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10 Application Information

- 10.1 Applications can only be submitted online using the British Academy [Flexi-Grant® Grant Management System \(GMS\)](#). Further information about the GMS can be found here: [British Academy Flexi-Grant® Guidance Notes | The British Academy](#). If you have not previously used the British Academy's Flexi-Grant® GMS and were not previously registered in the previous e-GAP system, please follow the registration process from the Flexi-Grant® homepage. Applications cannot be submitted on paper or in any other format.
- 10.2 Before completing the online form, all applicants should check that they comply with the eligibility requirements and ensure all necessary information is presented in the application. These requirements are strictly adhered to, and applications without all the necessary information, or evidence to show the assessment criteria are met, will be rejected.
- 10.3 Registered approving organisations will be available in the search bar. If your organisation is not listed and is not affiliated with any organisations already in the system, then please contact us at grants@thebritishacademy.ac.uk to request the addition of the organisation.
- 10.4 Applicants should be aware that this application form will be considered by the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund Committee for final decision on awards. The application will always be treated as confidential.
- 10.5 **Feedback is not a feature of the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund scheme**, and the Academy is, regretfully, unable to enter into correspondence regarding the decisions of the awarding Committee, which are governed by the Code of Practice.
- 10.6 **Please note** that by applying in this scheme, applicants undertake to accept the terms under which applications are assessed.
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11 Code of Practice

- 11.1 The Academy has a Code of Practice for assessing research applications, setting out the principles of equity, integrity and confidentiality governing the treatment of all applications for research support. The Code of Practice also covers Data Protection, the Academy's ethics policy and the appeals procedure. The [Code of Practice](#) may be viewed on the Academy's website.

12 Contact Details

- 12.1 Should you have any queries, please contact:
grants@thebritishacademy.ac.uk
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13 Appendix: Items eligible for funding from the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund

13.1 Eligible costs

- Travel and maintenance away from home
- Research assistance
- Consumables (i.e. purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms, etc., and any other minor items that will be used up during the course of the project)
- Specialist software (**excluding** commonly available office packages)
- Costs of interpreters in the field
- Project planning and development costs
- Short-term consultancy or salary costs of expert staff
- The costs of preparing illustrations, including photography, acquisition of images, draughtsmanship and cartography or other bespoke illustrative material; the costs of reproduction rights for text or images; the costs of conservation (please see note 1)
- Incidental translation expenses (please see note 1)
- Childcare costs, where unavoidable (please see note 1)

13.2 Ineligible costs

- Computer hardware, including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras etc.
- Books and publications
- Permanent resources and equipment or any elements that should properly be ascribed to departmental or university overheads
- The preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, or any other editorial task
- Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)
- Costs of publication in electronic media
- Payment to the principal/ co-researcher(s) in lieu of salary, or for personal maintenance at home
- Replacement teaching costs
- Travel /maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours, or writing up results of research

- Attendance at or organisation of conferences either in the UK or abroad to disseminate the results of research.
- Institutional overheads

13.3 **Note 1**

The case made must be explicitly approved by the Academy.