

Postdoctoral Fellowship - Frequently Asked Questions:

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Additional Needs Funding:

Are there any avenues of support available to applicants who require additional assistance completing their application form?

The British Academy has set aside specific funding to support any additional needs that applicants and award holders may require. This funding pot is available for both current award holders and applicants who would like to apply for an award but need support with submitting their application. [Further information is available on our website](#).

Choosing a Host Institution:

The Academy requires Postdoctoral Fellows to be based in an institutional setting, but there is considerable uncertainty as many UK universities are currently looking to close or reconfigure departments. What impact will my choice of host institution have on my application and my chances of award?

As the UK's national academy for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the British Academy is firmly committed to supporting excellent postdoctoral research across the full range of UK institutions. Selection for the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship scheme is, as the scheme notes specify, based on the individual merit of the applicant. The PDF 'is not an award to the host institution' though applicants 'must ensure that it is a suitable environment for their field of research' at the time of application.

We understand that the current UK university crisis, about which our President has issued statements in 2025 and 2026, may cause prospective applicants anxiety. We underline that applicants are assessed based on individual merit and the availability of a suitable environment for their project at the time of application, as attested in their application. In circumstances where institutional change subsequently renders a research environment unsuitable, the Fellowships are portable to an alternative institution.

Eligibility:

I got my PhD in 2020, but I decided to work in a non-academic job for a few years. Does this count as an exemption?

No, unfortunately the only exemptions we consider are breaks taken due to care commitments or for personal health reasons. If you feel you are eligible for exemptions, please send us an email to posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk to review this.

I have received two doctorates, the most recent is within the eligibility range for this scheme but the first is outside of the date range. Am I still eligible to apply?

The British Academy assesses eligibility based on the date of your most recent doctorate, provided it falls within the remit of the Humanities and Social Sciences. If the viva voce examination for your most recent doctorate was outside the period of April 2024 to April 2027, you would not be eligible to apply.

Please note that all other eligibility criteria must also be met in order to apply for the Postdoctoral Fellowship.

I will not have my viva voce examination until early 2027/ My viva voce examination has not been scheduled yet. Can I still apply?

If you are reasonably confident that your viva voce examination will be held before 1 April 2027, then you may apply. However, if there are any changes last minute that push your viva voce date beyond the 1 April 2027, you will have to withdraw your application.

Does a master's degree in the UK count as 'prior association'?

No. Masters study in the UK does not count as 'prior association'. Strong prior association with the UK academic community typically means a current significant period – with a minimum period of one year, which will need to be completed prior to your application being submitted - of employment at a UK institution in either a teaching or research position which is not permanent. Please note that applicants must complete a minimum of one year demonstrating strong prior association by 1 January 2027.

Can I apply if I do not intend to work in a university setting after the award?

Yes. This award is intended to help researchers to develop their careers, and an acceptable outcome is to prepare you for a research career in a range of research organisation settings, not exclusively limited to universities.

If awarded the Postdoctoral Fellowships, can I live in the UK part-time?

No. If awarded the Postdoctoral Fellowship, you will be required to primarily live in the UK and engage with the proposed Institution for the duration of their award (this does not include trips or conferences that are essential to research).

Suitable Subjects:

I am seeking funding for a project in the field of biochemistry/physics/engineering, can I apply?

No. The British Academy is the UK's national body for the Humanities and Social Sciences. We therefore only fund research proposals from within humanities and social science subject areas. However, interdisciplinary projects which include subjects outside of the Humanities and Social Sciences are welcome to apply.

If you are concerned that your project may fall outside the remit of the British Academy, contact posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk before applying.

What do you mean by endangered or emerging subjects?

The definition around this is broad and typically endangered or emerging subject areas are those that are newly formed, becoming more prominent or those that are in danger of becoming lost.

My research is practice-based, am I eligible to apply?

The British Academy welcomes proposals for high-quality research in all its subject areas. While all proposals should be situated in an appropriate field of study, they may vary considerably in their approach to conceptualisation, methodology and/or outputs, depending on the discipline. In some cases, creative and professional practice may play a significant role in shaping the methods and/or outcomes of research. In all proposals, whether practice-

led or not, a clear scholarly rationale is required for the choice of research methods, processes and outputs.

Application Process:

How many times can I apply?

You can only apply once. Those who are invited to the second stage of the competition can re-apply, provided that they still meet the eligibility requirements. If an applicant has previously not passed eligibility checking, or had to withdraw their application, and still meets current criteria, they can apply for an exemption.

Please email posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk if you have any questions regarding your eligibility.

Can I apply at multiple institutions?

You can only apply via one institution.

What is the Second Stage? Can I apply at the Second Stage instead?

The Postdoctoral Fellowship competition is a two-stage process. Only those who are successful at the Outline Stage can apply for the Second Stage. The Second Stage is invitation only. If you were previously successful in getting to the second stage, but did not get an award, you would need to re-apply at the first stage again.

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 home institution.

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 research proposal – you cannot upload this as an additional document. Please note that the reference list will contribute to the word count.

I am applying via an institution which has an internal selection process, can the British Academy provide advice?

While we are able to provide advice in a general sense on the Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme, for instance regarding eligibility or suitable funding, internal selection processes are operated entirely independently of the Academy. We cannot advise on how to complete the internal selection process.

Scheme Finances:

How much will I get paid?

You will be paid your host institution's standard rate for an equivalent position. The British Academy does not generally involve itself in contract discussions.

Does the fellowship cover visa costs?

Yes, if a host institution will incur visa costs to employ a potential applicant, these will be able to be costed and covered in the Full Economic Costing, separate from the research expenses and other elements of the budget. When submitting financial details at the second stage, any costs for this should be clearly stated in the justification section.

When will I need to submit detailed financial information?

If you are successful in the Outline Stage of the competition, and are invited to submit a Second Stage application, you will be required to submit detailed financial information as part of your Second Stage application.

What can be covered by the research expenses element of the Postdoctoral Fellowship?

The Research Costs portion of the Postdoctoral Fellowship is intended to provide funds to cover the costs incurred in planning, conducting and developing the research project.

It cannot be used to fund the purchase of non-specialist computer equipment, or other permanent resources or equipment which should more properly be ascribed to departmental/institutional overheads. It also cannot be used towards the costs of publication, including open access fees and editorial costs.

Detailed guidance regarding eligible and ineligible research costs will be provided at the Second Stage. If you have any queries regarding costs, please contact posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk.

Referee Statement:

What does the referee have to do?

Your nominated referee will be asked to fill in a questionnaire on our Flexi-Grant system. They will be asked to comment on your abilities, academic record, and research proposal. The reference must be completed and submitted for the application prior to the closing date.

Can PERSON X be my referee?

Your referee should be familiar with your project and able to comment on its significance, feasibility, and on your abilities. Your referee should be as independent from you as possible. We recommend the External Examiner for your PhD. The reference may be supplied by a scholar based outside the UK if you wish.

Please note your referee cannot be your proposed mentor, your supervisor, an internal examiner, or someone based at the same institution that you propose as your host organisation. Applications submitted with an ineligible referee will not be considered.

When does my referee need to submit their reference?

You can invite your referee to support your application at any point during the submission process. Please note that your application cannot be reviewed until both the referee and the host organisation have completed their parts. This is all due by 30 September 2026, at 17:00.

Please ensure that applicants and/or Research Offices are responsible for ensuring referees adhere to the deadlines. Applications cannot be submitted without a completed referee statement.

Mentoring:

Can I have more than one mentor?

No – the mentor position is a paid role and can only be taken up by one person.

Can my mentor be based at a different organisation?

No. Our expectation is that the mentor is from someone within the department you are applying to. This mentor is there to help you settle into the department, ensure your participation as a full member of the staff, and to support you with any departmental issues.

Open Access:

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.

When I apply for funding through any of the awards offered by the British Academy, can I include in the application the cost of APCs (Article Processing Charges) or other open access fees?

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

Part-time Working:

Can I take the award on at part time, so that I can work on a different project part time?

No. The Postdoctoral Fellowship buys you out for 100 per cent of your time. No other award or position can be held alongside the Fellowship.

Are there any circumstances where the award can be held part-time?

Requests to work at less than full-time but devoting 100 per cent of an award-holder's working time to the research for which the award has been given, will be received sympathetically, and may be agreed where there are good reasons for this – the most usual case for this will be on grounds of caring responsibilities or illness.