



Postdoctoral Fellowship Outline Stage 2024-25: Scheme Guidance Notes

The following Scheme Guidance Notes set out the eligibility and application process of the British Academy's Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme.

Please read the Scheme Guidance Notes and the Application Guidance Notes carefully.

Any application which is incorrectly submitted will be ineligible.

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Overview

Aim of the scheme

The British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship offers outstanding early career researchers the opportunity to strengthen their experience of research and teaching in an academic environment. This scheme aims to help develop the award holder's curriculum vitae and boost their prospects of obtaining a permanent academic post. The primary emphasis is on the completion of a significant piece of publishable research, and the integration of the award holder into the community of established scholars within their field. The Fellowship is tenable for three years, starting autumn 2025 in a UK based university or higher education institution or independent research organisation. The Fellowship is non-renewable.

Number of awards

It is expected that up to 45 Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences will be available to start in autumn 2025. This scheme is extremely competitive, and the success rate in recent years has rarely exceed 10%. The Academy will typically receive hundreds of applications for the available awards.

Suitable subjects for award

Suitable subjects for the Fellowship include any field of study within the Humanities or Social Sciences. 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.

Responsibilities of Applicants:

Applicants are expected to avoid research misconduct when making their application.

Research misconduct includes the fabrication, falsification, misrepresentation or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research or in reporting results, as well as misrepresentation, mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data and/or primary materials.

Applications which engage in research misconduct will be disqualified from consideration.

Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Fellows

Award holders are expected to develop lines of original enquiry in their subject, as well as to gain some experience of teaching (no more than five hours per week).

The British Academy expects an annual report from Postdoctoral Fellows, detailing the progress of their research, teaching experience and publications. Any books arising from the work done during the Fellowship should be posted to the British Academy.

Financial basis of the scheme

Postdoctoral Fellows will be employees of the institution at which they hold their award and are therefore subject to the terms and conditions of employment of that institution. The scheme is covered under the Full Economic Costing (FEC) regime. Currently, the Academy funds 80% of salary costs, directly allocated and indirect costs under FEC. Research expenses are covered at 100% within the upper limit, which is set at £6000 over the three years. The £6000 may be allocated unevenly between years.

Please note that virement of funding between headings will not be permitted. Full detail of the FEC is not required by the Academy at the Outline Stage of application.

The initial salary will be expected to be commensurate with the early career stage of the applicant, and therefore equivalent to posts with similar duties and levels of responsibility within the host institution pay grades.

Timetable of the 2024-25 competition

Outline Stage applicants are invited to supply information about their past academic experience, publications and research proposal. A referee will be required to answer a questionnaire about the applicant and their research proposal. Please note that referees are unable to upload documents and will need to complete the statement on Flexi-Grant. Outline stage applications do not need to include costings.

The Second Stage of application is by invitation only. The Second Stage requires the additional Head of Department Statement, details of the Full Economic Costing and research expenses, and a sample of written work.

Applications must be submitted and approved scheme by 5pm (BST) 2nd October 2024.

Referee contribution must be complete before the application can be submitted for approval. Organisational approval must be recorded by **5pm (BST) 2nd October 2024.**

Outline Stage 2024-25

- Scheme Opens – 3rd July 2024
- Deadline for Submission – 2nd October 2024
- Result of Outline Stage Announcement - January 2025

Second Stage 2024-25

- Scheme Opens – 15th January 2025
- Deadline for Applicants – 19th February 2025
- Result of Second Stage Announcement – End of June 2025

Earliest Project Start Date – 1st September 2025.

Latest Project Start Date – 1st January 2026.

Please note that all awards will need to begin within the above time period and the start date cannot be pushed back past 1st January 2026.

Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility

1. British citizens and any nationals from the European Economic Area are eligible, regardless of where their doctorate was obtained. Anyone of any nationality who has a doctorate from a UK university is eligible.
 - a. If an applicant does not meet the prior categories, they may be accepted if they can demonstrate ‘strong prior association’ with the UK academic community. This 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. Master’s degrees (MA or MSc) do not count.
2. Early Career Status: There is no age criterion for these awards. Instead, eligible applicants are expected to be at an early stage of their career. This is defined as being within three years from the date of your successful Viva Voce examination.
3. This period extends from 1st April 2022 to 1st April 2025.
 - a. Exemption from this criterion may be granted for reasons occurring after the date of the viva voce examination such as: maternity leave, illness, family commitments etc. If you wish to apply for exemptions, please send us an email at posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk where we will review your case for an exemption on a case-by-case basis.
4. The applicant must already be of postdoctoral status at the time when the Research Awards Committee meets. Applicants who expect to have had their viva by 1 April 2025, are eligible for consideration, but will have to withdraw their application if the examination is not completed on time.
5. No applicant who has been appointed to a permanent academic post in an institution of higher education at any time in their career, whether in the UK or overseas, will be eligible. This includes positions held before the award of a doctorate.
 - a. Exemption from this condition will generally be granted if an applicant has held a permanent role of less than 0.5 FTE. Please send us an email at posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk to apply for an exemption.
6. The British Academy does not allow for resubmissions for the Postdoctoral Fellowship. If you have previously applied and failed to reach the Second Stage of the competition, you are not eligible to re-apply. Previously unsuccessful applicants will only be able to submit another application if specifically invited to do so by the British Academy.
 - a. Exemption from this condition will generally be granted if an applicant has previously not passed eligibility checking and still meets current criteria. Please send us an email at posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk to apply for an exemption.

It is important for those considering an application to think carefully about whether they and their proposed project are at a sufficiently advanced stage to be submitted to such a competitive scheme.

Referee Statement

Applicants are required to nominate one referee. The nominated referee will have to answer several questions about the applicant and their research proposal. Applications without a completed referee statement will not be considered.

Your referee should be familiar with your project and able to comment on its significance, feasibility, and on your abilities. 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 or an internal examiner. Applications submitted with an ineligible referee will not be considered.

Proposed Institution

Awards are made to individual scholars for their merit. This is not an award to the host institution, though it must be held in an institutional setting. Applicants are advised to give serious consideration to their choice of institution and must ensure that it is a suitable environment for their field of research.

Suitable institutions include any UK university or recognised UK research organisation based in the UK. Some institutions based overseas are included, such as the British International Research Institutes or overseas campuses of UK universities.

Applicants and their proposed host organisations must be able to explain how support for the career development of the award holder will be delivered and why the proposed host organisation is best placed to ensure that relevant opportunities are made available in the event of success.

The Academy is open to proposals where the full range of career development may be led by one host organisation but delivered in partnership with others. For example, in a research-based organisation, where teaching experience might be gained in a partner organisation, or where an applicant works in a centre which is part of an established inter-university collaboration. Payment of the funding awarded will continue to be made to the lead organisation only. The Academy expects a clear statement about the arrangements for the sharing of funding to be included in the financial detail's justification section of the application at the second stage of the assessment process.

Applicants are encouraged to consider moving to a different institution for the Postdoctoral Fellowship from that at which the doctorate was undertaken. However, the Academy will in no way disadvantage applicants applying within the same institution, if there is a strong case for remaining - whether for academic or personal considerations. You may use the 'Personal Statement' section of the application form to expand on this if needed.

The grants management system, [Flexi-Grant](#), requires that the institution approves the application, to indicate that they agree to provide further information, including the Full Economic Costing of the application at the Second Stage of the competition. Institutions may require plenty of notice and may well have internal deadlines. Contact with the proposed institution at the earliest possible opportunity is strongly recommended.

[Appendix 1](#) sets out advice to potential host institutions and explains what the Academy expects host institutions to provide in terms of facilities, teaching opportunities and as an employer. The proposed host institution will be asked to confirm the formal acceptance of a Postdoctoral Fellow once an award has been approved.

When naming a potential host institution, applicants should bear in mind that they are committing themselves to that institution. The Full Economic Costing basis of the award means that the flexibility to move institutions prior to taking up an award is severely limited. Only rarely in exceptional cases may agreement to transfer an award be given.

Role of the mentor

Your proposed host institution may already operate a formal scheme of mentoring for new members of staff and, if so, you will be expected to be covered by the scheme. If no such scheme is already operational, the Academy has adopted a set of guidelines indicating what such a scheme is expected to involve.

The mentor should be an established and experienced member of staff, if possible, in an academic field close to that of the Postdoctoral Fellow, whose role is intended primarily to provide moral and practical support and advice.

It is not suggested that the mentor should act in a supervisory capacity. However, mentors should be asked to take an interest in the PDF, showing concern for their welfare, and making themselves available for consultation on such matters as personal and career development, research and teaching opportunities, approaches to potential publishers and the presentation of work for publication.

The Academy expects that the mentor should not need to devote more than the equivalent of one hour per month to these tasks, and that is the limit of the Academy's contribution to the costs of mentoring.

The selection process

Initial assessment of applications is made by subject specialist assessors. Decisions on these outline applications will be communicated to all applicants by the end of January 2025.

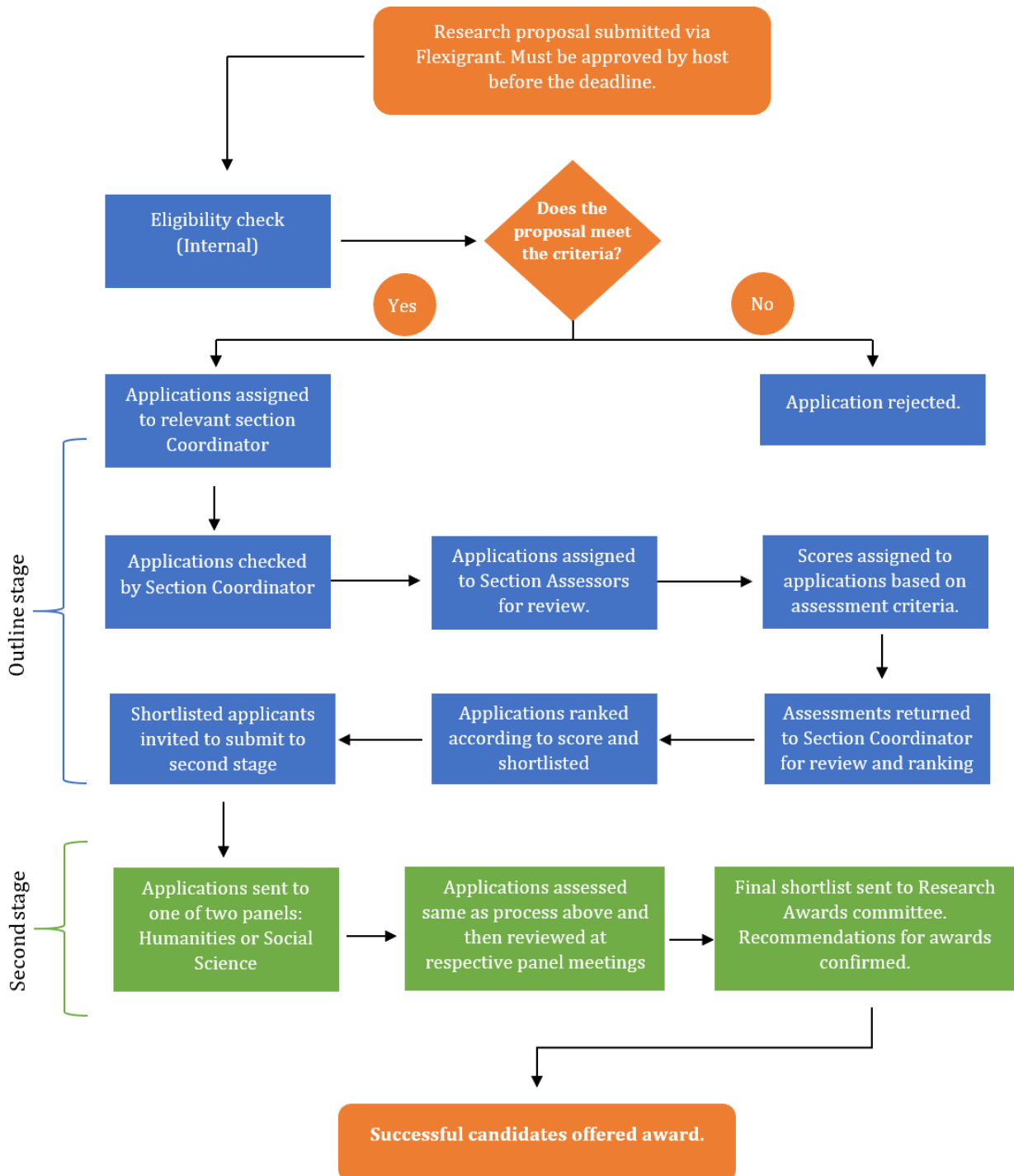
Assessors will consider the scholarly importance of the project, the ability of the applicant, the feasibility of the proposed research programme (focusing on proposed methodology and timescale), and the applicant's publication record, bearing in mind the early career focus of the award. Assessors may consider language competence where understanding material in a foreign language is crucial to the research objective.

The initial assessment of applications is made by peer reviewers, whose comments and recommendations are then considered by the Research Awards Committee. Specific advice may also be sought from other experts. There are no interviews prior to offers being made.

By late January 2025, the British Academy expects to invite submission of Second Stage applications from a smaller number of applicants, probably no more than 15–20% of the original field. The Second Stage application allows the applicant to update their proposal, publications and academic experience. It will also require detailed financial costings, and the submission of a sample of written work.

The Second Stage submission will be considered by specially appointed selection panels. Recommendations are then placed before the Academy’s Research Awards Committee, which is expected to meet in May 2025. Offers will be issued to successful applicants, and the prospective host institution will be asked to give its consent before the award is confirmed.

The flowchart diagram below displays the assessment process described above:



Notes on British Academy Flexi-Grant® Grants Management System

For information on the Flexi-Grant® Grants Management system, please view the [guidance notes here](#).

Submission of application

Once you have submitted your application for approval by your host institution, an automatic email will be sent to the organisation approver for your host institution. The organisation approver will either: approve and submit your application, 'send back' your application for edits/corrections or decline your application. You must complete your application with enough time for your host institution to review and approve your application.

Host institutions must record their approval by 5pm (BST), 2nd October 2024.

It is recommended that you allow at least five working days for this process. Please check with your proposed host institution as their internal timetables may require earlier submission. If your host organisation approver requests modifications, they can return your application to you for editing.

Once an application has been approved by the organisation approver, it cannot be returned.

Please note that once the closing date has passed, host organisation approvers cannot approve applications and submit them to the British Academy. Unapproved applications are removed from consideration.

Code of Practice

The Academy has adopted 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. Regrettably, feedback is not a feature of this programme. The Academy is unable to discuss the decisions of the awarding Committee, which are governed by the Code of Practice. Submission of the application form constitutes the applicant's agreement to all terms, conditions and notices contained in the Scheme Notes.

Anyone registered with special needs, please get in contact with us if you require additional support. Part time study, for example, may be possible to support your needs.

Assessment Criteria

Assessors evaluate each proposal based on 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 and the intended outcomes. Assessors will evaluate the ability of the applicant to undertake the proposed research, considering their track record in terms of publication, their academic age and stage of career. 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.

Outcome of application

Once your application has been fully submitted, you will not be contacted again by the British Academy until decisions have been made. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by the end of January 2025. Results are issued by email.

Applicants in any doubt about their eligibility or any other aspect of their application are advised to contact the **Research Funding Office** at the **British Academy**.

Email: posts@thebritishacademy.ac.uk

Important dates:

Deadline for application submission and organisation approval: **5pm (BST) 2nd October 2024.**

Results announced by email to address on application: **Late January 2025**