

British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Outline Stage 2016-17

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I apply? Can I have an application form?

All applications are made electronically through the e-Gap site. Applications cannot be made separately on an electronic or hard copy form via email or post.

Do I have to have obtained my doctorate before making an application?

No. Applicants who have not yet submitted their theses, but expect to do so in time to have the viva voce examination on or before 1 April 2017, may be accepted in the competition. If the viva is not subsequently held in time, the application will need to be withdrawn. If it is already clear that the thesis cannot be submitted or examined until the summer or autumn of the year in which the award would be taken up, there is no point in submitting an application.

My application was unsuccessful in a previous round of the Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme and I was not invited to resubmit. Am I still eligible to apply this year?

No. From the 2015-16 competition onwards, unsuccessful applicants are only able to submit another application to this scheme if advised formally of their eligibility to do so by the British Academy. All candidates planning on applying to the Postdoctoral Fellowship competition should therefore consider whether they, and their proposed project, are at a sufficient level to be submitted to a highly competitive scheme.

If I am unsuccessful in the 2016-17 round of the Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme and am not invited to resubmit, can't I simply change my proposed project in order to be eligible to apply again?

No, resubmission to this scheme applies to the individual candidate and not the proposed research project/application. Simply amending your research project will not make you eligible to apply again to the scheme

I am aged 35 etc? Am I eligible to apply?

No reference is made to a candidate's age in determining eligibility. Rather the Academy refers to 'early career status'.

How does the British Academy define ‘early career status’?

Early career is defined as being within a three-year period from the award of a doctorate. For the 2016-17 competition the three-year period extends from 1 April 2014 to 1 April 2017 and is taken from the date of the viva voce examination, not the date of graduation.

What grounds will be accepted as constituting an acceptable case for exemption from the recency of postdoctoral status clause?

All cases will be considered on their merits by the Research Awards Committee. Where there are good reasons, exemption from this criterion may be granted, provided the applicant can demonstrate that they have a reasonable period in an academic career ahead of them. Good reasons would be likely to include interruption to an academic career after the date of the viva voce examination for maternity leave, family commitments, illness etc.

Am I eligible in terms of recency of postdoctoral status? (e.g. along the lines of, I obtained my doctorate a few years ago but have since been out of academic life because...)

All candidates who have been formally awarded their doctorate within three years prior to the submission of an application are eligible. Potential applicants who do not meet this requirement need to set out a case for exemption from this criterion demonstrating that they are of early career status, and that they have the prospect of a reasonable period in an academic career ahead of them. It is unlikely that an applicant whose academic career has progressed uninterrupted through other research fellowships, temporary teaching posts or research assistantships will be given exemption.

Am I eligible in terms of ‘prior association with the UK academic community’?

The Academy accepts as eligible all of the following:

- British nationals who have a home or family home in the UK are eligible, even if they have studied for a doctorate overseas.
- Anyone, of whatever nationality, who has obtained a doctorate from a UK university (within the terms of the eligible time period specified above), is eligible regardless of whether or not they are currently resident in the UK.
- EEA nationals who did not obtain a doctorate from a UK university are eligible.
- Applicant’s may also make a case for having a prior association with the UK academic community through, for example, already having been employed in a temporary capacity (longer than twelve months) at a UK university

I don't meet the standard terms of eligibility regarding 'prior association with the UK academic community'. Can I still be considered for an award?

The Academy will consider accepting an application from any candidate who does not meet the standard criterion provided they can demonstrate a 'prior association with the UK academic community' that is equivalent to that of having obtained a doctorate from a UK university. This may include, but is not limited to, being resident in the UK and working in a temporary capacity (more than one year) within a UK university or other research institute.

I already hold a research fellowship. Am I eligible to apply?

If the doctorate was formally awarded within the three years prior to 1 April in the year in which an award will be taken up, yes, without question. If the doctorate was awarded prior to the qualifying date, the potential applicant would need to be able to give a convincing explanation of how they could still be considered to be of early career status, given the experience they will already have obtained. The aim of the scheme is to help recently qualified postdoctoral scholars to obtain permanent academic posts. Very few awards are available each year, and the opportunities are limited. The Research Awards Committee will prefer to give awards to scholars who most need this opportunity to develop their academic career.

I have received more than one doctorate, how will the Academy calculate whether I am eligible for a Postdoctoral Fellowship?

In cases where a candidate has been awarded more than one PhD, the Academy will consider an applicant eligible if they are within three years of the award of the doctorate most relevant to the research that will be undertaken during the proposed Fellowship.

What contact do I need to have with a potential host institution before submitting the application?

It is essential that both a relevant academic, such as Head of Department, and the relevant administrative authority, such as Research Services Officer, Research Grants and Contracts Officer or equivalent is contacted at the earliest possible opportunity. The application will need to be approved by the relevant approver registered in e-GAP for the proposed host institution. The proposed host institution will also be expected to commit themselves to a certain standard with regard to the treatment of the Postdoctoral Fellow, details of which are set out in the scheme notes. It is also worth noting that many institutions hold - usually in the months prior to the scheme being formally opened - their own internal competitions to determine which candidates/applications they will support. For more details on any internal institutional competitions please contact the host institution directly as the British Academy has no involvement in this process.

Does the institution need to provide Full Economic Costing details for this application?

The institution is not required to provide any financial details to the Academy at this stage. Only in the event of an invitation to submit a second-stage application will the FEC details need to be completed for the Academy. Internal requirements of host institutions may vary however and may require candidates to finalise the financial details prior to the approval of any Outline application.

Can I apply to hold the Fellowship at the same institution at which I did my doctorate?

Yes. The Academy encourages applicants to think carefully about the appropriate base for the Fellowship, and encourages movement when appropriate, but it does not require Postdoctoral Fellows to move to a new institution for the Postdoctoral Fellowship. We will always be looking for evidence of the suitability of the match between the host institution and the research topic, and for evidence that the proposed host institution will provide suitable facilities, training opportunities and support for the Postdoctoral Fellow, in general treating them as equivalent to a new permanent full-time member of staff and not a superannuated postgraduate student.

Who should I approach to be my referee?

The Academy very strongly recommends that the external examiner is the most suitable referee.

What if the external examiner is unavailable because the viva voce examination has not yet been held, or for other reasons is unable to act?

There is no single definitive answer if the external examiner is unavailable. It will depend on the applicant's circumstances. In all cases the referee should be someone who may be perceived to have a similarly independent relationship to the applicant. This might be someone who is aware of the applicant's work from having read material submitted for publication or having heard conference presentations. The choice of referee is a personal matter, but it may be significantly damaging to an applicant's prospects if the Academy's advice on the 'externality' of the referee is ignored.

How will the referee be contacted and do I need to send them a copy of my application?

Referees are contacted via the e-GAP system, and the referee will be sent a formal email requesting the reference after the application has been submitted and approved by the prospective host institution. Applicants may choose to send a copy of their application form to the referee outside e-GAP if they wish to do so, but references **must** be submitted via e-GAP.

Can the person who acts as referee (the external examiner of the thesis) also act as the postdoctoral mentor?

No. Your nominated referee cannot be an individual who will benefit directly from the award of the Fellowship.

The person that has agreed to act as my mentor is retired but is often still involved in the work of the Department, is this allowed?

Given that the mentor's role is mainly to help the award-holder integrate fully into the academic life of the Department, Faculty, Institute or research centre in which they will be based, we would not normally consider it appropriate, or be in the best interests of the award holder, for a retired member of staff to fulfil this role. If, however, a case can be made that the retired member of staff is happy to act in this capacity on an unpaid basis and will agree to provide the full range of support that the Academy would expect of a mentor during the three years of the Fellowship, then this will be considered by the assessors.

Is it a problem if my mentor is planning to retire before the Fellowship is completed?

Potentially, yes. It is preferable to have the same mentor throughout the Fellowship, and the mentor should be someone in an established position in the Department/Faculty/Centre in which the Fellowship is based. Mentorship can be transferred from one scholar to another, however, if necessary.

Is my subject area suitable for support?

The Academy supports research in all fields of the humanities and social sciences. The remit of BA funding schemes does not include primarily practice-based outputs such as in musical composition and performance, visual practice, creative writing, and film-making. Such outputs will be considered to fall within the BA's remit only when they form part of an integrated project of critical or historical significance.

Are there any quotas for different subject areas?

No. There are no quotas for any subject area, nor for the division between humanities and social sciences.

How many awards are given each year?

The current Delivery Plan is based on the award of up to 45 awards per year.

How many applications do you normally receive? What are my chances?

These awards are extremely competitive. In recent competitions around 800-900 applications have been received each year, giving a success rate of little more than 5%.

Can I apply for funds to purchase a laptop or other equipment in order to complete my project?

No. British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship funding cannot be used to pay for computer hardware, including but not only, desktop and laptop computers, tablets or similar items. The British Academy considers it the responsibility of the host organisation to provide appropriate computing equipment and facilities to enable you to undertake your Fellowship.

Does the scheme provide funding for publishing the PhD thesis in book form? Or is it a condition to propose an entirely new project?

It is not advisable to base the research proposal for the three-year Fellowship simply on publishing the PhD thesis in book form. Rather, evidence of progression to a second project will be required - one for which the applicant can demonstrate they have the necessary skills to carry it out successfully based on the experience gained in the PhD research and any subsequent academic experience.

How will my application be judged? What is the selection process?

Applications are assessed initially by subject specialists who will identify the most promising candidates to be invited to submit second stage applications. All applicants will be informed of the result of the outline stage at the same time. Those invited to proceed to the second stage will be expected to provide a submission of written work, which will be considered in conjunction with the other material already submitted by one of two selection panels representing more comparative assessment. There is one panel for the Humanities and one for the Social Sciences. The final decision on all applications is taken by the Research Awards Committee.

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) 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.