

UKRI Policy Fellowships 2023: Fellowship Opportunity Description

Fellowship Title: FCDO Geographical Focus Fellowship

Host Organisation: [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#)

Host Team: South Asia & Afghanistan Research Group or Middle East & North Africa Research Group, Research Analysts Cadre, Research & Evidence Directorate

Summary: Foreign Policy Fellowships with Geographic focus on either South Asia and Indian Ocean region or Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Fellowship Theme: Building a Secure and Resilient World. *Please see the full call text 'What We Are Looking For' for a detailed summary of the research themes targeted in this call.*

Policy Topic: Foreign Policy relevant to these areas

Research Council: AHRC

Academic Discipline/s: Political science, international relations, anthropology, history, political economy, area studies or similar

Research Career Stage: Open to early and mid-career researcher

Fellowship Structure

Inception Phase:

Estimated Start Date: October 2023. *Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements*

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main Placement Phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 0.6-1.0 FTE (preference for 0.8 FTE or greater)

Knowledge Exchange Phase:

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work Arrangements

Location Requirements: As well as remote working, Fellows will be required to spend time physically in the FCDO building in central London. Ways and patterns of working will be established in the inception phase. Many FCDO staff work flexibly

Hybrid Working: 40%-60% attendance pro rata in the FCDO's London office is expected.

Security Clearance: Security Check (SC) level. See national security vetting [clearance levels](#). We ask successful candidates to start the SC application process as soon as their fellowship offer has been confirmed by ESRC/AHRC, before the inception phase begins, because the process is likely to take several weeks.

Fellowship Opportunity Description

Opportunity to work on the recent and contemporary socio-politics and international relations of geographical regions. The topics are linked to FCDO priorities including those springing from the recent Integrated Review (IR).

Fellows will be attached to either the South Asia & Afghanistan Research Group or the Middle East & North Africa Research Group. Both are within the FCDO's Research Analysts Cadre, itself part of the Research & Evidence

Directorate, and both work closely with relevant geographical policymaking Directorates and with other policymakers in the FCDO and wider Whitehall.

The fellow will have the opportunity to co-design clear research tasks in collaboration with officials in government based on policy needs and the fellow's interests/skills during the inception phase of the fellowship.

You can apply to be placed to work on one of the following geographic areas and topics:

- a. India's foreign policy and regional relations. This would be an opportunity to work on priority areas of India's foreign policy in a UK policy context of its Indo-Pacific tilt as outlined in the UK's Integrated Review and the increased cooperation between the UK and India, elevation of the partnership to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership', and the agreement to strengthen ties through implementing the 2030 roadmap. The research focus would include India's relations with states in South Asia under its 'neighbourhood first policy' and India's engagement with the Indian Ocean region, the primary area of India's maritime interest (as outlined in India's Maritime Security Strategy), on which its security, prosperity and stability depend.
- b. Middle East and North Africa, with scholarly expertise on either GCC states or Iran and willingness to extend their range.

GCC states: As important middle ground powers with growing influence in the wider region and on the global stage, the GCC states are high priority countries for the FCDO across a broad range of themes, from trade and investment to climate and energy, regional security, aid and investment partnerships, and global geopolitics. Our primary interest is in a scholar with a focus on the GCC states' international relations, their influence in the wider region (Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia), and their relations with regional (Iran, Israel, Turkey) and global (US, Europe, Russia, China, India) powers. Expertise on the GCC states' social, political and religious dynamics, including views of political leadership; political Islam, transnational salafism, and transnational Shia dynamics; youth demographics; media and social media; economy and political economy; energy and climate would also be valuable, but is a lower priority focus for this fellowship.

Iran: A high-priority country for the FCDO, on a broad range of policy themes, including nuclear, regional and hostile state activities and human rights. Our primary interest is in a scholar with a focus on internal Iranian social and political issues: including societal trends, civil society, ethnic minorities and their relations with the State, the informal economy, corruption, water/environment, and migration into/out of Iran. External issues, such as relations with GCC states, Russia, China and India, diaspora-Iran relations, are a lower priority focus for this fellowship.

Person Specification

Applications will be assessed against the following opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Essential Criteria:

- Deep expertise on the recent and contemporary socio-politics and international relations of one of the geographical areas in the context of international geopolitics.
- Strong written and oral communication skills. The role will require communicating complex topics clearly and cogently to busy policy makers; and working closely with policy and MENA research group colleagues, entailing strong team working skills.

Desirable Criteria:

- Awareness of UK foreign policy
- Experience in teaching or briefing non-specialist audiences
- Arabic and/or Farsi

Additional information

About the FCDO. Uniting diplomacy and development in one Government Department the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) makes a real difference to the world. It was created in 2020 from the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development and is at the heart of an unrivalled global network of economic, diplomatic and security partnerships.

The FCDO pursues our UK national interests and projects the UK's role in the world. We promote the interests of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend our values, reduce poverty and tackle global challenges,

positioning the UK as a responsible, reliable and effective international actor and partner and investing in the global relationships we need for the long term.

We employ over 17,000 staff in our diplomatic and development offices worldwide, including in 280 overseas embassies and high commissions. Our UK-based staff work in King Charles Street, London, and Abercrombie House, East Kilbride. We also have staff based in Milton Keynes. Relevant SAARG and MENARG staff work in King Charles St.

Working in the FCDO. The FCDO unites development and diplomacy in one department. We have highly specialised and unique research requirements and operate in a world where having access to high-quality evidence-based analysis can mean the difference between success and failure. But we also operate in a world of nuance and subtlety where exerting influence, negotiating and leveraging others' power at precisely the right moment is at a premium. Timing is key. This makes it difficult for academics operating outside to have a significant impact. Academics often have the best ideas; but these ideas are not always injected into policy at the right moment. Working in close proximity to and in tight interaction with FCDO policymakers can help change this, providing opportunities to influence and to challenge. Whilst no one can guarantee that the approaches and recommendations made by academics will shape UK foreign policy, bringing academic expertise directly into the heart of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office through this scheme enhances the chances of creating meaningful impact on British diplomacy.

The FCDO is a friendly and supportive place to work and many staff have flexible working patterns. Fellows are fully integrated into the FCDO's structure and are placed within a policy team which could be geographic or thematic as well as within a research and analysis focussed team, for example the Research Analysts Cadre whose analysts are usually in place for years, or even decades. Fellows have a line manager and additional support and mentoring will be provided. This [blog](#) by a former Fellow and a former Head of Research Analysts gives a sense of some of the challenges of straddling the FCDO and academic work. Work-planning is a mixture of demand and self-tasking based on evolving FCDO needs. An indicative list of tasks includes: writing papers and shorter notes, oral briefings for senior officials and ministers, meeting external and cross-Whitehall partners, research visits overseas as well as organising and running masterclasses. The ability to communicate clearly and succinctly, highlighting policy relevance to non-experts is of importance to all FCDO work. So too is the ability to work collaboratively with others and to do so at pace, sometimes delivering to tight deadlines. For all Fellowships we seek a 12-month placement period.

Security clearance. For security reasons, and in line with FCDO policy, successful applicants have to be security cleared before the offer of the fellowship placement can be confirmed. The level of security clearance required for these fellowships is Security Check. While UK nationality is not essential, applicants need to have a minimum of two years residence, including 12 months of continuous residence in the UK in the preceding five years. Dual nationality is not in itself a barrier but potential applicants who have close ties to the area(s) on which they would be working, or who are not UK nationals, must contact the FCDO (Personnel Security Team, ESD.PST@fcdo.gov.uk) before applying since there may be security limitations which would prevent them from accessing the necessary material, making a successful fellowship impossible. Loss of clearance during the fellowship period, for example, due to personal conduct, will risk termination of the secondment. All security clearance decisions are personal to the applicant and depend on a range of factors.

Code of conduct. As an additional condition to the standard fellowship terms and conditions, the fellows will need to agree to respect the FCDO's values and standards of behaviour; failure to do so may result in the termination of the fellowship. Fellows will also be obliged to respect the provisions of the Official Secrets Act and observe the duties of propriety and confidentiality during and after the fellowship period. This means consulting the FCDO before undertaking activities involving: (a) the disclosure of UK Government official information; and (b) the publication or disclosure of material liable to affect the Government's relations with other countries. An FCDO-nominated contact will be responsible for the sensitivity review of all publications prior to their submission for publication. However, the fellows will not be obliged to make amendments to the content unless publications contain information that it is in breach of the Official Secrets Act (as laid out in the Civil Service Code), or a confidentiality agreement, or which could disclose sensitive, classified and/or personal information, or which could affect the Government's relations with other countries. The agreement to be signed by Fellows, their research organisations, the FCDO and the relevant UKRI Research Council(s) will include the above matters