

UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: DSIT building growth enhancing Research and Development (R&D) and innovation systems economics fellowship

Fellowship type: Core policy fellowship

Host organisation: [Department for Science Innovation & Technology](#)

Host team: Strategic Foresight (SF) Team within the Science Technology and Innovation Analysis Unit (STIA)

Summary: opportunity to influence the structure of the UK R&D and innovation system to deliver stronger productivity, growth and welfare outcomes for the UK

Policy topic: maximising the impact of UK R&D and innovation policy in driving economic growth. This relates to the government's Growth Mission

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): economics

Research career stage: open to mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

Inception phase:

Estimated start date: February 2026. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements

Duration: three months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main placement phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 0.6 to 1 FTE

Knowledge exchange phase:

Duration: three months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements: fellowship can be based in London, Cardiff, Birmingham or Edinburgh offices. If based in a location outside London, some travel to London offices may be required

Hybrid working: DSIT has a two day per week minimum office working requirement. Some negotiation may be possible. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) is expected to take four to six weeks from submission. We expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by ESRC. Ideally the security clearance process would be completed before the inception phase begins. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels](#) for more information

Fellowship description

The UK performs relatively strongly on international R&D and innovation benchmarks but performs less well in terms of its impact on economic growth and productivity. It has a longstanding lag relative to its close competitors such as the USA and Germany.

The STIA Unit sits at the centre of the Science, Research and Innovation Directorate (SRID) in DSIT. STIA's main role is to understand the UK innovation system in order to direct R&D investment policy and understand the impact of public investment.

The SF Team is part of STIA and provides strategic economic and analytical insights on issues of critical national significance such as the reforms of the R&D system and comparative analysis of the R&D systems in order to develop policy insights. Currently, its main focus is how the UK R&D and innovation systems would work best to deliver strong economic and welfare outcomes for the UK economy.

To deliver on this purpose the SF Team will be carefully considering all aspects of the UK R&D and innovation systems, design research to identify factors that make these systems effective, and influence policy thinking and decisions on alternative approaches.

The fellow will be embedded in the SF Team but will also work with other teams in STIA. They will be involved in codesigning and conducting policy analysis from the following range of topics:

R&D and innovation systems:

- The mechanisms through which national R&D and innovation systems can better deliver innovation and economic growth
- How the UK R&D and innovation system compares to other countries in delivering economic growth and prosperity and what can be learned from them

Growth enhancing R&D:

- Understanding how firms engage with government incentives on R&D and innovation to enhance their productivity and growth
- Assessing the balance between maintaining a comparative advantage or closing the gap on areas of disadvantage
- Investigating how business sectors engage with public R&D funding and how the government's (direct and indirect) funding of R&D be more targeted to UK growth sectors

Innovation:

- Investigating the UK's barriers to maximising the potential of innovation as a driver to economic growth
- Understanding what limits UK innovative companies from scaling-up and creating growth as seen in the US technology sector or the German advanced manufacturing sector
- Understanding why focusing specifically on high-growth innovative or Science and Technology companies is important for economic growth

Expected outcomes:

We expect contributions from the fellow to directly feed into developing research questions that lead to targeted, novel analysis which fills evidence gaps and actively guides thinking on policy and inform decisions. Systems thinking is essential. The fellow will combine strong analytical skills and develop deep understanding of the UK R&D and innovation system, enabling valuable inputs to the SF Team's thinking and actively shaping it with regard to what analysis is most relevant and actively progressing the work. In terms of type of analysis, the fellow will have opportunities to carry out qualitative and quantitative analyses (primarily econometrics). The latter will likely be based on official microdata, commercially available datasets or both.

SF Team is focused on tackling complex research questions, anticipating evidence needs and shaping senior decision-makers' thinking by providing novel insights and plugging evidence gaps and answering tomorrow's questions today. The fellow's contributions will be integral to the team's success.

Expected outputs:

- Evidence summaries tailored to different audiences but mainly for senior figures
- Contribution to ongoing policy debates, acting as a critical friend on the evidence and offer new ways to approaching policy issues
- The fellow will contribute to the evidence base on shaping the national R&D and innovation system. We anticipate the fellow's findings will inform thinking and help design policy (or policy interventions) which will be required to maximise the UK's productivity and growth potential
- Working with policy colleagues to embed evidence into effective policy development

Benefits to the fellow:

- The fellow will contribute to strengthening the analytical capacity around issues of critical national significance to influence the thinking that will shape tomorrow's UK R&D and innovation system
- SF Team is part of a multidisciplinary analytical team bringing together economists, statisticians, social and operational researchers with close links to other analysis teams across the department allowing the fellow to develop deep understanding of the workings of government analysis, operations and policymaking
- Although publication will be subject to clearance, we welcome academic publications using the research conducted during the fellowship. We will support other knowledge exchange opportunities including seminars and workshops where relevant and interaction with senior policymakers

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria:

Essential criteria:

- A proven academic track record in economic research with a focus on R&D, innovation and productivity
- Ability to synthesise multiple types of evidence to draw out relevant insights and make policy recommendations
- Experience or demonstrated potential for the design, development, management and timely delivery of economic research
- Experience of microdata analysis on productivity, R&D, innovation and growth or demonstrated potential thereof
- Proven ability or openness to deliver knowledge exchange activity, communicating and presenting complex economic analysis to non-technical audiences, both orally and in writing

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be assessed at the host led interview selection process against the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements:

Desirable criteria:

- Experience working with UK R&D and business microdata
- Expertise in stakeholder engagement and collaboration, in particular with policymakers

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

DSIT's privacy notice can be found here: [privacy notice](#). Hosts will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.