

UKRI Policy Fellowships 2025 – Frequently Asked Questions

Applications

Q Where can I find the list of opportunities?

A A list of the 42 opportunities can be found in the Funding Finder under the 'Additional info' section <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-policy-fellowships-2025/>

Q Can multiple applications be submitted per applicant?

A No. Please submit one application. If applicants have an interest in alternative specific fellowship opportunities, these should be noted in the appropriate section of the application.

Q How many applicants typically apply for each position?

A This is variable; for the 2023 opportunity the average was ~4 applicants per position with some positions receiving over ten applications, however demand can change round on round.

Costs

Q Can mentors be costed for their time?

A Justified costs can be requested to support the mentor's contribution to the fellowship.

Q Is there a list of things that can and can't be funded?

A Please see the Resources and Cost Justification Guidance on the Funding Finder for information. <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/UKRI-140425-Funding-Opp-PolicyFellowships2025-ResourcesCostJustificationGuidance.pdf>

Q Fellows' level of involvement will vary during the fellowship depending on which phase they are in (between 0.4-1.0) but how should this be input into the 'Resources and Costs' section in the TFS portal - there is only functionality to input 1 overall FTE percentage

A Applicants should input the average of the 3 phases into TFS. This will be 0.8FTE if working 1.0FTE during the main placement, or 0.53 FTE if working at 0.6FTE and detail these in the resources and costs justification section of the application.

Q In the call guidance it says that there are additional funds available for research and collaboration costs for the Natural Hazards and Resilience Policy Fellowships and the What Works Innovation Fellowships. When we do our costings should we allocate this money to specific things e.g. researcher salaries, travel. Or do we just cost in the lump sum as it'll become clearer during the inception phase what this might be used for?

A The research and collaboration costs should be added as a lump sum. Successful applicants will report expenditure plans to UKRI at the end of the fellowship inception stage.

Q How do we cost for T&S?

A Please see the Resources and Cost Justification Guidance on the Funding Finder for information. <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/UKRI-140425-Funding-OPP-PolicyFellowships2025-ResourcesCostJustificationGuidance.pdf>

Q Can collaborators claim costs?

A No. In addition to the applicant themselves, only the following justified staff costs are eligible:

- A small amount of justified administrative support for the fellow.
- Mentorship support, as is required for Early Career Researchers applying to the call.

Justified costs can be requested to support the Mentor's contribution to the fellowship.

The research and collaboration budget (NH&R and WWI) can be used to fund research staff, which should be discussed when co-designing the project with the host during the inception phase.

Q Does the fellowship provide teaching buy out for the 12 months to be spent at a host institution?

A The fellowships can be awarded between 0.6-1.0FTE. The Research Organisation will receive funding for successful applicants to cover the fellows' commitment to the fellowship. Research Organisations should ensure that the fellowship and any ongoing commitments do not total more than 1 FTE. E.g. if the fellow's main placement is at 0.8FTE all other commitments, including teaching, should not exceed 0.2FTE.

Q When planning project costs, specifically in relation to community engagement & policy workshops, would the assessors prefer applicants to plan largely online workshops (aka extremely low budget), or in-person workshops (aka more expensive, with venue & catering costs, etc.)?

A Applicants should cost for the most appropriate method of delivery, ensuring these costs are within the maximum allowable cost for the award, and justified in their application.

Q Can further flexible funding above the 15k be included?

A All costs above the £15k flexible funding and the additional Research and Collaboration budget available to What Works Innovation Fellowships, and Natural Hazards and Resilience Policy Fellowships, should be fully costed and justified within the maximum FEC of the fellowship.

Eligibility

Q What is the definition of an early career researcher and a mid-career researcher?

A An early career researcher is somebody who has yet to establish or transition to independence (where an independent researcher has submitted their own proposal and taken on the role of project lead); there are no eligibility rules based on years since PhD or whether you currently hold a permanent or open-ended job role.

A mid-career researcher is somebody who has established independence, having, for example, taken on the role of project lead, published works of intellectual distinction, or established a significant track record as a 'champion' within their field. This would not ordinarily include professors but may include assistant or associate professors, where the applicant can make the justification that they meet the mid-career descriptor.

Q Can you take up a fellowship as a recent PhD graduate or academic without a position currently in place?

A A successful applicant must be employed by the employing organisation (RO), for the duration of the fellowship. Applicants do not necessarily have to be employed at the time of application. Please see the Person specification section on the Funding Finder at <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-policy-fellowships-2025/>

Q I live in Scotland, can I apply to opportunities outside of Scotland?

A Applicants can apply to any of the policy fellowship opportunities, irrespective of where they reside. Expectations relating to visits to the host organisation are stipulated in the specific fellowship opportunity descriptions. Travel and accommodation to the host can be costed.

Q Is the fellowship open to international researchers?

A Yes, if employed at a UK organisation eligible for funding. Please see the specific fellowship opportunity description document for information relating to eligibility/security/vetting requirements.

Q Is it right to assume professors are not allowed to apply to core policy fellowships?

A The core policy fellowships and Natural Hazards and Resilience policy fellowships would not ordinarily include professors but may include assistant or associate professors where the applicant can make the justification that they meet the mid-career descriptor.

Employing Organisation

Q Do fellows typically return to their host organisation after the fellowship?

A Typically, yes, though there is no requirement for former fellows to remain at their employing organisation at the end of their fellowship.

Q Are you eligible if you are not currently in a full-time permanent position?

A A successful applicant must be employed by the employing organisation (RO), for the duration of the fellowship. Applicants do not necessarily have to be employed at the time of application.

Q Is it okay to be hosted by a university, rather than being directly employed by them?

A Applicants must have a contract of employment for the duration of the fellowship.

Time Spent on Fellowship

Q Can the fellowship be part time to continue with ongoing projects?

A Yes. The placement phase can be costed between 0.6FTE and 1.0 FTE, however, please check the specific position documents for the required FTE during the placement. The inception and the knowledge exchange phases are both 0.4FTE.

Q If a fellow does the fellowship part-time, e.g. 0.4 FTE in the first 3 months then 0.6 FTE for the next 12 months, does this mean that the fellowship will be longer than 18 months?

A No. All fellowships are 18 months long.

Q Can applicants have a current fixed-term contract in place with an employing organisation?

A Applicants/fellows can hold a fixed-term or open-ended contract, which must be in place for the duration of the fellowship,

Location

Q Will fellows have to be present in the offices of the host, and will there be any flexibility for home working?

A Please see the specific fellowship opportunity description document for information relating to the expected place of work.

Opportunities

Q Do I need to be a British citizen to work with Government and pass the security checks?

A Please see the specific fellowship opportunity description documents for information relating to security clearance requirements for each position.

Q Do you need to be an academic from a university in Scotland to be considered for a Fellowship with Scottish Government?

A No. Applicants to fellowships with the Scottish Government do not need to be employed by a Scottish research organisation.

Q The application form has a section for 'Alternative Policy Fellowship positions'. Are the two alternatives across the three different types of Policy Fellowship, or are they intended to suggest different hosts, or both?

A This section can be used to describe up to two alternative fellowship positions an applicant may be interested in, which can come from across the Core Policy Fellowships, the Natural Hazards and Resilience Policy Fellowships, and the What Works Innovation Fellowships.

Q Is the UKRI Policy Fellowships the same as the DSIT Fellowships? Can some apply to both if they are different?

A The Policy Fellowships are not the same as the DSIT Fellowships. Applicants can apply to both, however, if successful would need to ensure that the time commitment for both did not exceed 1FTE.

Q Do you anticipate further rounds of UKRI Policy Fellowships?

A Future Policy Fellowship opportunities will be subject to the outcomes of the Spending Review.

Project Partners

Q Can applicants list project partners?

A There is no provision for project partners in these fellowships.

Speaker Q&A

Q Professor Hill, can you please speak to the alignment between your academic/research background before the fellowship and how that linked to the work you did in climate change (since you are a Psychology professor I assume that is your background).

A RH: My background before the fellowship was in emergencies, civil protection, risk, resilience, wellbeing, and societal wide risks (including climate change and pandemics). So, the work I did during the pandemic developed the breadth of my work - but also supported me to fully understand and engage in interdisciplinarity. I had worked in multidisciplinary teams previously, but not worked in a really embedded interdisciplinary way before. The fellowship allowed me to develop these opportunities and consequently my skillset in this area grew exponentially.

Q Any tips for discussing this with your academic institute? I am a lecturer and not sure whether my university would support this as an opportunity. Have you had any resistance from the academic side of the coin?

R RH: I haven't had resistance, per se, but there are people within my line management chain who are more comfortable with policy work than others. My senior leadership team were very supportive and understood the opportunity well, but several of them have worked alongside governmental departments themselves. The challenge we have faced as a cohort is the change in circumstances of publishing outputs or not. Across our fellowships of the 21-22 cohort, we concluded our secondments as a change in government occurred and this has complicated a number of publication plans with the host department as priorities change and new leadership comes in.

Q What was the project you applied for, please? Just to help me put this in context.

R RH: It was to work across the different climate relevant teams within MHCLG (DLUHC as it was called then). So, there was no one 'project' for my fellowship - it was more about getting expertise of social sciences across teams who mostly had physical science backgrounds to understand the wider context more fully. After my inception phase I focussed on three areas, energy certificates as a tool to inform mitigation behaviour, societal resilience to climate impacts, and then a third area of activity which formed smaller more targeted pieces of work about science and knowledge environment of the department.

Q Could this be the right opportunity for someone who is considering a career transition away from academia and towards full time policy work?

R EM: I think the Policy Fellowships are a great opportunity for academics to get a better appreciation of the various roles undertaken by scientists and analysts within government. They

also facilitate networking and close working with policy colleagues so therefore give the fellow an idea of the policy role within government.

Q To what extent do you 'bring in' other researchers/academics into policy roundtable (versus relying on your expertise or literature evidence?)

R RH: For me I think this is pivotal, but that is a personal perspective - hence why I mentioned the importance of knowledge brokerage in the meeting. Particularly because I feel policy should be developed through a good understanding of how confident we are of findings/arguments/positions within the evidence base. However, a lot of my work was also based on literature reviews and my own expertise. But I certainly made it my own personal practice to ensure that the teams I was working with knew how my research was situated in the wider evidence base and how confident we could be of that evidence base. Whether that was a literature review or expert roundtables, they took a different life depending on the nature of the project I was working on.

Q How closely related to your academic background does the fellowship have to be? I am in a theoretical discipline but very interested in pivoting to policy related research.

R RH: For our cohort part of the benefit was in applying our knowledge in ways that we maybe had not done before. So, some of our work was a more direct overlap with the projects, and sometimes the overlap was felt in unexpected ways (aligned to skills rather than content, or the other way around). The interview process should consider this, to explore how the fellowship can benefit from your skills, knowledge, and qualities, as well as how the fellowship offers the candidate a range of rich developmental opportunities.