



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Welcome

Early career fellowships in cultural and heritage institutions: overview

Andrea Bond, Senior Investment Manager, AHRC Skills Team

Empowering Emerging Talent in Cultural and Heritage Research

- funding individual fellowships for early career researchers hosted by cultural and heritage independent research organisations (IROs)
- a complementary programme of networking events and cohort career development activities for the fellows

Objectives of the scheme – for the fellows

- create opportunities for early career researchers to gain experience within cultural and heritage organisations
- Support skills development and future research careers aligned with the sector



Objectives of the scheme – for the hosts

- Deliver high quality and impactful research projects
- Enhance capacity to undertake research and innovation activities which:
 - ✓ Are closely aligned with the host's priorities and strategies
 - ✓ Will lead to practical benefits and outcomes for the host



Objectives of the scheme – for the wider sector



address a lack of dedicated early career support across the cultural and heritage sector



promote equality, diversity and inclusion principles and diversify research capabilities



extend the cultural and heritage sector's engagement with, and contribution to, society

Eligibility Requirements - Fellows

Candidates for fellows

You must:

- ✓ Be UK-based or eligible to work in the UK
- ✓ Demonstrate commitment to work in the cultural sector
- ✓ Either be in employment or have a commitment of the host to employ you
- ✓ Be of 'postdoctoral standing'
- ✓ Submit one Expression of Interest aligned with the [IRO areas of interest](#)
- ✓ Fellowship projects must fall within the AHRC's remit

Information regarding the AHRC's remit can be found in our [Research Funding Guide](#) p. 89-95.

Eligibility – Postdoctoral Criteria

To be of postdoctoral standing, you must meet one of the following criteria:

- Identify as an early career researcher (ECR) in the arts and humanities, based on AHRC funding history

OR

- Have no more than 6 years of postdoctoral research experience

OR

- Have no more than 6 years in roles which research was a significant part of the role.

[AHRC guidance on training and developing early career researchers in the arts and humanities.](#)



Eligibility Requirements - Hosts

Host organisations

You must:

- ✓ be an independent research organisation (IRO) in the cultural and heritage sector, included in the [UKRI list of IROs](#)
- ✓ undertake research in [an area suitable for AHRC funding](#)
- ✓ provide a supportive research environment for the fellow
- ✓ commit to employ the fellow for the duration of the award

Partnerships and Collaborative Opportunities



Host organisations may choose to Co-host a fellow with another IRO



or partner with other UK Cultural and Heritage organisations



Or Universities or international organisations

Training and Development



- Fellowships will include a tailored training and development programme
- Includes sector-specific training, panel discussions, and networking
- Supports career development, peer learning, and inclusive participation
- Fellows are expected to actively engage – 0.5 days per week

[Early Career Research Fellowships in Cultural and Heritage Institutions](#)

Duration and Timings

- fellowships can be full-time, part-time or hybrid (a combination of the two)
- they can last for a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years (longer if part-time)
- Expressions of interest closes 10 December 2025
- Fellowships start 1 January 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- We welcome applications from candidates in under-represented groups within the cultural and heritage research sector
 - ❖ for example, ethnic minorities and disabled people
- Disclosure of personal characteristics is optional
- See the Equality Impact Assessment on UKRI Funding Finder



Read the Funding Finder text in detail to check eligibility and to ensure you understand the requirements and the application process



Consider the [IRO areas of interest](#) (Excel spreadsheet) and approach an IRO



Submit an Expression of Interest form for your preferred host via the Cohort Coordination and Development team at the V&A by emailing e.Rowley@vam.ac.uk by 10th December 2025.



Attend an interview if short-listed



If successful in IRO sift, co-design the project and collaborate on the full proposal with your host



IRO submits proposal to AHRC



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Thank you



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