

New Generation Thinkers (NGT) 2026 – FAQs

Completing your Application:

Review

1. Does the 'review' in the application have to be outside of my research area?

A. The review should be aimed at a public audience and must be on a topic and discipline separate from your research.

2. How recent does the subject of the review need to be? Could you write about something from a couple of years ago, that you just came across recently?

A. This would be fine - the important part is your writing and thought process.

3. Can you expand a bit more on what is meant by point of difference?

A. This is just about making your application stand out from the others - what can you offer that someone else couldn't?

4. Is the UKRI Funding Service separate from the NGT Application? Or is this the same thing.

A. It's the same thing - the Funding Service/TFS is the platform on which you do the application.

Submissions process

5. Is it encouraged that our applications are checked by our 'research office' aka our home school?

A. It is generally part of the university's process that the applications need to be approved and submitted by the research office. Universities use various names for their research offices, with common terms including "Research Office (RO)," "Research Services," and "Research Support Office" or "admin office". If your RO have a Funding Service account with administrator status they will be notified when an applicant from your organisation creates an application. Please also see [our website](#) for more information.

2026 Programmes:

6. How many New Generation Thinkers are being recruited this year? A. We aim to select five New Generation Thinkers – one for each programme/unit.

7. Are applicants expected to indicate for which programme(s) they want to pitch in their application?

A. Yes, please do include the name of the programme in your application title.

8. My research covers more than one programme - can I make an application for each of them? Or what is the best criteria to choose one?

A. You need to select one programme or unit. With the specificity of the individual programmes, it would be difficult to pitch the same idea to two programmes. AHRC and BBC reserve the right to assign applicants to different programmes if their research fits.

9. Are the programmes themselves involved in the decision-making?

A. Yes, each programme has representatives who are involved in the assessment process.

10. I was wondering whether there are any specific requirements for politics - e.g. topics that should be avoided, or the way we talk about contentious topics.

A. The BBC mentor will guide you as to what would be appropriate to discuss within the context of the programme and in line with the BBC's broader editorial guidelines.

11. Does Free Thinking and Thinking Allowed count as one unit, or could applicants apply to either one?

A. Both of those programmes fall within the same unit; you may apply to 'Free Thinking/Thinking Allowed' and your application could refer to both or either programme.

12. I see certain units encourage applications from Wales, South-West/North of England. What about Scotland?

A. Scotland isn't on the list this time, but applications are welcome from across the UK.

13. How, if at all, has the NGT scheme changed since moving from Radio 3 to Radio 4?

A. What the scheme offers in terms of the type of training remains the same as previous cohorts. The move to Radio 4 has created the opportunity for NGTs to be associated with a number of different programmes/units whereas previously, NGTs were associated only with Free Thinking. The time commitment and number of opportunities to appear on air have not changed.

14. Does the research discussed need to be in progress during the time of the programme? Can we mention multiple projects?

A. Your proposed topic can be either your current or past research, as long as it fits with the programme you are applying for; we are interested in you as a researcher and how well you can pitch to the BBC and communicate your ideas to a radio audience. We want to see your ideas and we encourage you to broaden your focus beyond your immediate research.

15. Who are the audiences/demographic for New Generation Thinkers/BBC Radio 4 (in general)?

A. Remember you are talking to a general not specialist audience. You need to think about what might hook them in and that it will be something that they can connect with. The BBC recommends listening to the programmes you are interested in to understand the breadth of what they cover.

16. I am curious about how the programme accommodates participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Could you please share some insights?

A. This scheme was set up to ensure that more diverse voices have a chance to share their ideas and passion for research with the public. This remains at the core purpose of the New Generation Thinkers scheme. The programme makers are looking to work with researchers whose ideas will challenge and surprise, covering well-known stories in new ways or shining a light on stories that need to be heard.

Scheme Eligibility:

Employment status

17. Do you need to have institutional affiliation for the period of the programme itself?

A. Your eligibility is measured at the time of application, so it's okay if you don't have an academic job lined up for after your PhD.

18. Could I be a NGT while working a full-time non-academic job?

A. Yes you could, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria at the point of application.

19. I am a recent PhD graduate but I have not yet secured a job. Does this mean I cannot apply because I'm not employed by an institution?

A. You will need to fit the eligibility criteria at the point of application, including “currently working or studying at a UK research organisation that is eligible to receive funding from UKRI. See [Eligibility of your organisation](#)”.

20. If I have a fixed contract that will run out part way through the 12 months is that still ok?

A. Yes, the eligibility requirements are that you must be employed by the institution at the point of application but your contract doesn't need to extend for the entirety of the award.

21. How do you define 'working' at a university, re eligibility? Does it need to be a paid role, or do honorary research fellowships count?

A. In order to apply, you need to have an association with an organisation which is [eligible for UKRI funding](#), and this can be as an honorary or visiting fellow (see 'Contractual eligibility for Project Lead and Project co-Lead (UK)' in [AHRC's Research Funding Guide](#)). You must **additionally** meet at least one of the following criteria:

- currently undertaking your first PhD and have made substantial progress in your research. For example, you may be within one year of submission
- within eight years of the award of your first PhD, excluding any period of career break such as parental leave, caring responsibilities, health reasons, or reasons consequent upon the COVID-19 pandemic
- within six years of your first academic appointment at an organisation that is eligible to receive funding from UKRI, excluding any period of career break such as parental leave, caring responsibilities, health reasons, or reasons consequent upon the COVID-19 pandemic. This must be a paid contract of employment, either full-time or part-time, which lists research or teaching as the primary function, including research assistantships

22. I am an academic who lives in Scotland, but I am based at an institution in the Southwest of England. What 'area' would my application therefore be coming from?

A. I believe the area in this scenario would be where you are employed i.e. the Southwest

23. Does section B of the eligibility criteria: you are within eight years of the award of your first PhD, refer to passing the viva?

A. Yes, this is correct.

International

24. Do you accept applications from outside the UK? (I am based in Ireland)

A. No, you need to be currently working or studying at a UK research organisation that is [eligible to receive funding from UKRI](#) & resident within the UK to apply.

25. Are international PhD students able to apply? "UK resident" vs "UK citizen"

A. You need to be employed or studying at a [UK eligible organisation](#) and be a UK resident to apply.

Career Stage/Prior Experience

26. The guidance notes that "senior academics" are not eligible. Could you please confirm that job titles containing "Senior" (e.g., Senior Lecturer) do not in themselves indicate ineligibility, and that eligibility is based on early-career status (for example, within eight years of PhD or within six years of first academic appointment at a UKRI-eligible UK research organisation)?

A. This scheme is intended for early career researchers (ECRs) as set out under "who is eligible to apply" on the [Funding Finder](#). If you meet these criteria, you are eligible for this scheme, even if you have the word "senior" in your current job title. We would additionally expect a senior academic to be involved in activities such as being a Principal Investigator/Project Lead on a grant, for example.

27. Hello, is there a requirement of "ownership" of a project I am working on?

A. As this is an opportunity for early career researchers, there is no expectation that applicants would have experience as project leads.

28. Do you have to have published a monograph in the field you are proposing to be considered?

A. No, as this opportunity is intended for early career researchers you will not be expected to have published a monograph.

29. Will this be running next year?

A. The New Generation Thinkers is a flagship annual opportunity that the AHRC intends to continue to offer, please bear in mind that the programmes/criteria can vary each year.

30. If a person has received funding for their PhD from AHRC are we still eligible for NGT.

A. Yes absolutely

31. Could a first year PhD student (UKRI funded) in the UK apply this opportunity?

A. Ideally you would have "have made substantial progress in your research" so usually we would expect applicant to be in the later stages of their PhD.

32. Is it an issue that before academia I worked as a journalist? I did not do broadcast journalism but mainly print journalism.

A. No, that's not a problem

33. If we have a YouTube channel talking about our research, what is the best video format suitable for the application?

A. Applications should be self-contained. You should only use hyperlinks to link directly to reference information. You must not include links to web resources to extend your application. Assessors are not required to access links.

34. Would prior experience of writing audio drama or speaking on audio/radio show formats be viewed favourably?

A. We're looking for researchers to demonstrate their enthusiasm and passion for engaging the public with their research. This could have been done in a variety of ways, including appearing on radio.

35. I am doing a practiced-based PhD in Film, is there any window for that?

A. The NGT opportunity is specifically intended to give awardees experience of working within a radio programme but the skills you will develop can be used more broadly in media, engaging the public and how to work with policy makers. As long as you meet the eligibility criteria you can apply to the opportunity.

36. Does age have any bearing? New implies young(er).

A. This opportunity is for early career researchers, regardless of their age. We welcome applications from all ages, this should not be a discriminatory factor and we value diversity.

37. Is there a minimum requirement for how many articles and or books or successful funding bids you have been involved with (in your topic area) to be considered?

A. You don't need to be involved in any, this is for early career researchers, so we don't necessarily expect this level of publication experience.

Working in the Arts & Humanities:

38. Regarding discussion topics, must they be social or arts related or does humanities part allow for health topics? E.g. Free Thinking topic.

A. As long as there is an arts and humanities element that's fine, e.g. how health interacts with arts and humanities.

39. Is interdisciplinarity positively evaluated?

A. Your research can bring together arts & humanities with non AHRC-funded disciplines, provided that you can demonstrate that there are suitable links to the world of arts and humanities, and that arts & humanities remains the primary focus.

40. Is this open to persons for the science discipline?

A. If you are from a discipline outside the AHRC remit, the application needs to consider arts and humanities at its core. As long as the primary focus is the arts and humanities, and it fits in with one of this year's programme specialisms, you can apply.

Finance:

41. Are travel costs covered for training?

A. Successful NGTs will be reimbursed for travel expenses for attendance at the training sessions scheduled by the AHRC, including media training, a photography and filming session and an evening dinner.

42. As for opportunities given to NGTs via AHRC, could you explain a bit more about the 'funding pot for the Being Human festival'?

A. Yes there is funding available for the NGTs to apply to participate in the [Being Human Festival](#). There are other routes to participate such as the general festival grants application process or through unfunded routes as well.

43. Is the funding compatible with my studentship PhD?

A. This isn't a funded opportunity but you can be awarded an NGT whilst undertaking your PhD. The only 'funding' is reimbursement for your travel/accommodation or a fee for appearing on air.

Career Development:

44. How have previous Next Gen thinkers made impact through their programming with the BBC?

A. A key outcome from being a New Generation Thinker is how it can help researchers develop professionally. Being on the scheme provides the opportunity to gain transferrable skills that help researchers communicate with confidence and seize unforeseen opportunities. For example, current NGT Dr Sarah Louise Smyth has said that

"being an NGT has not only informed the way I think about research but also the way I think about teaching".