



# UKRI policy fellowships 2026

## Fellowship position

### Fellowship title:

Scottish Government catchment resilience fellowship

### Fellowship type:

Natural hazards and resilience fellowship

### Host organisation:

[Scottish Government](#)

### Host team:

Environmental Quality and Resilience Division (EQR); Water Scarcity and Coastal Erosion Team; Water Environment Team; Rural and Environmental Sciences and Analytical Services (RESAS).

### Academic discipline/s:

Climate adaptation, water resilience, catchment management, biodiversity and natural capital

### Summary:

Opportunity to better understand and evaluate catchment resilience to inform Scottish Government policy on water, land use, natural capital and climate adaptation, helping Scotland to prepare for climate-related hazards including drought and flooding.

### Policy topic:

Scotland is committed to tackling the crises of climate change, nature loss and pollution, securing the wellbeing of our people and planet for generations to come. Place based approaches are key to delivering these outcomes, with river catchments providing an important spatial unit to focus stakeholder collaboration to enable more effective and efficient delivery of climate resilience outcomes. Improving catchment resilience – the ability of a catchment to adapt to change – delivers multiple outcomes at the catchment scale. This fellowship proposal will develop catchment resilience indicators that will inform the performance of our environmental policies at the catchment scale.

A dedicated catchment resilience fellow will provide focussed resource and knowledge to enable cross cutting policy areas to better collaborate in defining catchment resilience policy and in developing multidisciplinary indicators to inform policy (water resilience, biodiversity, land use, natural capital investment, economics).

This work fits within two of the five research Missions in the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA) Research Strategy 2027-32 (restoring nature and protecting our environment; delivering climate-positive and resilient landscapes). The work would contribute to the First Minister's Priority to tackle the climate emergency, as well as contributing to commitments under the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP3), informing revisions to SNAP3's M&E Framework (scheduled for 2027), the

development of the fourth River Basin Management Plan, the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy, nature restoration targets within the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, the Land Use Strategy and SEPA's Water Scarcity Plan. The project would complement multiple research projects (including future work on data and modelling integration; and better use of AI/technologies) that are ongoing and will be commissioned under the next ENRA Research Programme (April 2027).

## Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

## Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE
- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

## Work arrangements

### Location requirements:

The role will be based at Scottish Government offices in Edinburgh (Victoria Quay and Saughton House).

### Hybrid working:

Whilst Scottish Government has a two-days a week office working requirement, we would be content for a minimum one day a week office attendance at Scottish Government offices based in Saughton House or Victoria Quay. This will be either a Tuesday or Wednesday to align with Division anchor days. One in-person day will be required during inception phase to attend an induction session in St Andrew's House organised by the Office of the Chief Researcher. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

### Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

The fellow will need to pass the [Baseline Personnel Security Standard](#) (BPSS). This process takes around six weeks and must be completed before the fellow can access Scottish Government systems. Security clearance should be confirmed before the inception phase can commence. Part of this entails verifying that the fellow meets the [Civil Service Nationality Rules](#) - see the [Annex C flowchart](#) to check eligibility for non-reserved posts. By applying for this fellowship, you are affirming that you have understood these requirements and expect to be able to pass BPSS.

## Fellowship position description

### Policy challenges:

The Scottish Government (SG) is committed to tackling the climate emergency. Appropriate evaluation methodologies and evidence to inform action on climate impacts and adaptation is crucial to effectively achieve this outcome. This is particularly the case when considering catchment management across landscapes with multiple climate impacts affecting water management (drought, flooding and water quality), biodiversity and agriculture. This fellowship has been developed to help fill this evidence gap. Outputs developed from this fellowship will directly support a number of SG policies including: water scarcity, flooding, climate adaptation, biodiversity and agriculture.

## Proposed research areas:

Given the wide range of policy challenges that this fellowship will be addressing there is potential for a multi-disciplinary fellowship covering research areas associated with catchment management, hydrology, biodiversity and ecosystems science, land use etc. While some primary data collection may be possible, we expect the bulk of the research to be around bringing together existing data in new ways as indicators and metrics to help inform decision making around catchment resilience. We are however not prescriptive on how this is done and are keen to see proposals that bring innovative and novel approaches to the outlined policy challenges.

## Co-design and collaboration:

We envisage that the fellow will carry out a research project to assess multiple factors affecting catchment resilience and use this information to develop indicators and metrics that can be used as an assessment methodology across Scotland's river basins. The full scope of this work will be agreed during the inception phase with wider consultation across relevant Scottish Government policy teams and other stakeholders such as Scotland's environmental and nature agencies.

## Opportunities and benefits:

The fellowship will provide opportunities to codesign, produce and publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider scientific and policy discussions while adhering to necessary security protocols. They will be integrated into Scottish Government (SG) systems and will be provided with a laptop and SG email address. They will also be integrated into both research and policy teams gaining in-depth understanding of the policy process while also informing and influencing wider government policy on important catchment resilience issues. They will have access to a wider network of policy, analysis, other experts and opportunities to engage with. RESAS will provide line management supported by the EQR team and liaison with Chief Scientific Advisor ENRA.

## 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:

- proven subject matter expertise and academic track record on catchment resilience and assessment at regional and/or national scales
- strong knowledge and experience in the use of ecological and hydrological statistical methods, data analysis and models
- experience of communicating (both written and verbal) complex, technical ideas clearly to stakeholders from different backgrounds from those with no scientific expertise, to different specialists at conferences or industry contacts

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:

- knowledge of the Scottish policy landscape with respect to climate change, biodiversity, flood resilience and other policy areas related to catchment management and resilience
- proven track record of complex project/programme management involving multiple stakeholders from inception to delivery

## 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](#).

Please see the Hosts' [privacy notice](#) and they 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.