

UKRI Policy Fellowships 2026 – Frequently Asked Questions

Applications

Q How do I approach the co-design element of the application?

A Whilst we ask applicants to set out a clear vision of how they will utilise the fellowship to inform government decision-making and maximise knowledge exchange, the approach should include meaningful collaboration and co-design with the selected host-partner and demonstrate an understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with this, including with non-academics. It should additionally demonstrate a clear understanding of host partner requirements pertinent to the specific fellowship position applied for,

Q Where can I find the list of opportunities?

A A list of the 50 opportunities can be found in the Funding Finder under the 'What we're looking for' section <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/sector-transition-ukri-policy-fellowships-2026/>

Q Can multiple applications be submitted per applicant?

A No. Please submit one application for the specific fellowship position you are most interested in. If applicants have an interest in alternative specific fellowship positions, these should be noted in the alternate fellowship positions question in The Funding Service (TFS).

Q How many applicants typically apply for each position?

A This is variable; for the 2025 opportunity the average was ~6 applicants per position with some positions receiving up to 16 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/2026/06/UKRI-010626-Funding-Opp-SectorTransitionUKRIPolicyFellowships-ResourceCostJustificationGuidance.pdf>. We would expect to see fellow's salary, travel and subsistence and mentorship costs. Research-related, impact and dissemination costs are not expected to be requested within the application, as the project will be co-designed with the host partner following award. Flexible funds should be requested for this purpose, as set out in the Resources and Cost Justification Guidance, with expenditure plans for these funds agreed with the host partner during the inception stage of the award.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, for example, 0.8FTE if working at 0.4 FTE during the inception phase, 1.0 FTE during the main placement, and 0.4 FTE during the knowledge exchange phase; or 0.53 FTE if working at 0.4 FTE during the inception phase, 0.6 FTE during the main placement, and 0.4 FTE during the knowledge exchange phase. Applicants should 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 at the application stage. These fellowships are co-designed with the host partner and, as such, expenditure plans will be discussed with the host partner during the inception stage when co-designing the fellowship and reported to UKRI.

Q How do we cost for T&S?

A Please see the Resources and Cost Justification Guidance on the Funding Finder for information. [UKRI-010626-Funding-Opp-SectorTransitionUKRIPolicyFellowships-ResourceCostJustificationGuidance.pdf](https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/UKRI-010626-Funding-Opp-SectorTransitionUKRIPolicyFellowships-ResourceCostJustificationGuidance.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 only) can be used to fund research staff, which should be discussed when co-designing the project with the host partner during the inception phase.

Q Does the fellowship provide teaching buy out for the 12 month placement phase, to be spent at a host partner organisation?

A The 12-month placement phase can be taken up at between 0.6-1.0FTE. The Employing Organisation will receive funding for successful applicants to cover the fellows' commitment to the fellowship. Employing Organisations should ensure that the fellowship and any ongoing commitments do not total more than 1 FTE. For example, if the fellow's main placement is at 0.8FTE all other commitments, including teaching, should not exceed 0.2FTE.

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

A No. 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 doctoral qualification 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 My academic background is not in social science, economics or policy research. Will I be eligible/competitive?

A Applicants should consider the essential criteria contained within the specific fellowship position documents and discuss this with their Employing Organisation as UKRI cannot advise on individual eligibility.

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, nor post-fellowship. The RO will confirm that applicants will be accepted into the department for the purpose of undertaking the fellowship within the application under 'Organisation support'.

If you're undertaking a PhD that is UKRI-funded, there is a separate Policy Internships scheme you may wish to consider instead: [UKRI policy internships 2026 – UKRI](#)

There are no eligibility rules based on years since doctoral qualification, but applicants who have recently completed PhDs should consider the competitiveness of their application, considerate of both research experience and track record, to determine whether this is the right time to apply.

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 partner organisation are stipulated in the specific fellowship opportunity descriptions. Travel and accommodation to the host partner can be costed.

Q Is the fellowship open to international researchers?

A Yes, if employed at a UK organisation eligible for funding and applicants can meet any additional eligibility and assessment criteria within the specifications for the fellowship position before submitting an application. This may include criteria relevant to security clearance requirements or nationality 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 Employing 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 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/fellows can hold a fixed-term or open-ended contract, which must be in place 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, 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.

Location

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

A Please see the specific fellowship position document for information relating to the expected place of work, as this differs per specific fellowship position.

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 position 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 Employing Organisation.

Q The application form has a question for 'Alternate fellowship positions'. Are the two alternatives across the three different types of Policy Fellowship, or are they intended to suggest different host partners, 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. Alternate positions will only be considered by exception if positions remain unfilled at the conclusion of the assessment process.

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 are expected to run annually during this spending review period.

Q Are there quotas for early career researchers and mid-career researchers?

A There are no quotas; applicants are assessed relative to their career stage. Core policy fellowships and Natural Hazards and Resilience fellowships are open to early and mid-career researchers. What Works Innovation fellowships are open to all career stages.

Project Partners

Q Can applicants list project partners?

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

Speaker Responses to questions:

Professor Ana Manzano

In your fellowship application, did you focus on specific research skills or expertise that were relevant to the potential host partner, or did you keep it more generic?

I tailored my application to the Department's call, highlighting my research skills and expertise that were most relevant to the role and their current priorities.

It would be interesting to hear a bit about what happened during the interview.

The interview was similar to a job interview, although it felt a little more conversational. There was plenty of opportunity to discuss my experience and how I could contribute to the work the Department wanted to undertake.

Could the panel offer any reflections or advice for applicants? Do you have any advice for someone who isn't quite ready to apply now but might want to apply in future years? What could they be doing now to strengthen their profile?

The focus of these fellowships changes with each call because they are designed around the Department's current needs. However, developing broader skills, particularly in knowledge exchange, will always strengthen your profile and prepare you for future opportunities.

How much knowledge exchange experience did you have when you applied for the fellowship

I had built up a substantial amount of knowledge exchange experience before applying.