

AHRC Fellowships Scheme Q&A

1. Information for Potential Applicants

Who can apply for the Fellowships?

The Fellowships are open to early career, mid-career and senior/professorial researchers from across the arts and humanities. Early career researchers will be expected to be post-doctoral researchers with at least a year of post-doctoral research experience or to have an equivalent level of research or professional/practice experience of direct relevance to the proposed research.

Awards will be made to a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) or Independent Research Organisation (IRO) eligible to receive AHRC research funding through 'responsive mode' schemes. Applicants will also be required to meet AHRC's individual eligibility criteria as detailed in our Funding Guide. However, Fellowships can include periods working away from the administering research organisation, for example on visiting or non-stipendiary fellowships to other institutions (including overseas or non-academic organisations) or during periods of intensive fieldwork, archive research or similar research activity.

How long will a Fellowship award last?

The length of an award can vary between a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 9 months. Applicants should apply for the length of time that best suits their proposed research within the overall scheme limits. The duration of the award will need to be fully justified in terms of the research activities to be undertaken, the expected outputs and the value added to institutional support for the fellow and the research.

How much time should I dedicate to the Fellowship?

Award holders should dedicate between 50% and 100% of their time to the Fellowship, based on a standard working week of 37.5 hours per week (100% time) or pro-rata for individuals who work part-time. No other activities (e.g. teaching or administration) are permitted during the time funded under the Fellowship with the exception of some post-graduate supervision which may be continued under the Fellowship provided that this is not to the detriment of the research. Applicants who intend to commit less than 100% of their time to the Fellowship can continue with teaching, administrative, management, other professional and/or research duties (including on AHRC-funded grants) in conjunction with the award.

Will I need a matching period of leave from my institution?

No, unlike the Research Leave scheme, the Fellowships scheme will not *require* a period of matching leave from the employing HEI. However, significant support is expected from the research organisation which could include, amongst other things, a period of leave linked to the Fellowship (see question below on institutional contribution for further details).

Will institutional support for the Fellowship be required?

Yes. AHRC sees the Fellowships as a partnership with institutions, complementing and adding value to institutions' strategies for supporting the research and career development of arts and humanities researchers.

A statement will be required from the Head of Department or other relevant Senior Manager. This should outline how the proposed Fellowship would fit within relevant institutional/departmental research, career development and knowledge transfer strategies, as appropriate. It should also indicate what support the institution has already provided, and will continue to provide, for the development of the applicant's research career and for the research they propose to undertake during the Fellowship. In addition to support for the early stage development of the proposed research, this

institutional support could, for example, include travel grants, funding of directly related research costs and/or networking and communication activities, provision of additional mentoring or training, or linked periods of institutional research leave. Evidence of significant and appropriate institutional support for a Fellowship application will be an important criterion in assessing applications and determining the priorities for funding.

How much can I apply for?

The scheme limit will be £120,000 at 100% full economic cost (fEC). The maximum AHRC contribution at 80% fEC will therefore be £96,000.

What costs can I apply for?

A Fellowship award will cover the cost of the fellow's salary together with estates and indirect costs. In addition, applicants can request funds to support the cost of their research, for example, travel and subsistence, equipment, and communication and dissemination costs.

For early career Fellowships, applicants may also request a contribution to the cost of a mentor's time (see below).

Applicants should consider their proposed budget carefully as value for money will be taken into account by peer reviewers. Applicants should ensure that the costs requested are appropriate for the proposed research.

What will be expected of me during the Fellowship?

Fellows will be expected to work on a specified research project or programme for the duration of the award. The focus of the research can be on any subject or topic within the AHRC's remit. The Fellowship can be used to support a wide range of research activities provided that these lead to significant specified research and other outputs by the end of the Fellowship, including the preparation of publications and other outputs from research conducted prior to the start of the Fellowship. Fellowships should also include communication and dissemination plans for the research, and fellows will be expected to pursue, as appropriate to the research, opportunities to engage with a wider audience beyond their academic peers.

The Fellowships are not intended to provide time to develop a new research project completely from scratch, but rather should build on a project that is already well defined and developed.

What form should the outputs of a Fellowship award take?

The outputs of a Fellowship can vary, according to the research. Applicants will be able to propose a wide range of academic and non-academic outputs, including monographs, edited volumes, journal articles, conference papers, exhibitions, installations, films, performances etc.

Can I be based elsewhere during the Fellowship?

Fellows can be located elsewhere, for example by taking a non-stipendiary or visiting Fellowship at another HEI in the UK or overseas, provided that they remain employed by the administering research organisation. In the event that the fellow moves institution during the award, appropriate arrangements for transferring the award would need to be agreed with the AHRC.

Will there be specific support for early career researchers?

Yes. The Fellowships scheme will include a route for early career researchers. This aims to enable the AHRC to work in partnership with institutions to support the career development of researchers at the start of their careers and to provide them with focused research time and appropriate support and mentoring so that they can broaden

their research experience and enhance their research outputs profile. We will aim to achieve a higher success rate for applicants to this route.

Who will be eligible to apply under the early career route?

In addition to the standard individual eligibility criteria, in order to apply through the Fellowship scheme early career route, you must at the point of application be either:

- between one and eight years (excluding career breaks) of the award of your Ph.D. or equivalent professional training; or
- within six years (excluding career breaks) of your first academic appointment and to have completed the relevant probationary period for your current academic appointment;

and:

- to have at least a year of post-doctoral experience in an academic/research environment or to have an equivalent level of professional/practice experience of direct relevance to the proposed research.

Previous or current holders of grants through the AHRC Research Grants Scheme's routes for early career researchers, or for practice led and applied research, and previous or current holders of grants through the research networking scheme may apply under the early career Fellowships provided that at the point of application they still meet the above eligibility criteria. Similarly, applicants for an early career Fellowship who have held research grants such as post-doctoral Fellowships or small or development grants from other funders, may apply provided that they meet the above eligibility criteria. Further details about the eligibility criteria are available in the AHRC Funding Guide. Evidence that the applicant meets these criteria must be provided in the case for support.

Fellowships for early career researchers under the scheme are not intended to enable early career researchers who have recently completed their Ph.D. to write up their doctoral thesis for publication or other dissemination. Early career Fellowships are aimed at supporting applicants to take forward new avenues of research which they have developed since completion of their Ph.D. or to pursue new research directions which have evolved from their Ph.D. research. The Fellowship will be expected to lead to substantive new research outputs. Applicants will be expected to explain in their application how the Fellowship differs, or takes a new direction, from their original Ph.D. research.

Will there be any specific requirements for my institution if I apply to the early career route?

Research organisations will be required to provide mentoring support for early career researchers for the duration of the Fellowship. The application should include details of the named mentor, a specified time commitment to mentoring, a clear programme of meetings and statement of contact time with the fellow, and commitment to a training and development plan.

The AHRC will make a contribution to the cost of mentoring. An hour per month of the mentor's time should be built into the budget as a Directly Allocated cost. However, institutions may provide additional mentoring support alongside other forms of training and/or career development support for early career applicants, as a part of their additional support for the Fellowship.

When can I apply?

The Fellowships scheme will operate with open deadlines. Applications can be submitted at any time from 1 September 2009.

How do I apply?

Applications must be submitted through the Je-S system. Detailed guidance for applicants will be available on the AHRC website in April/May 2009 and the application form will be available in Je-S on 16 June 2009.

When can I start the Fellowship?

Applicants will need to allow sufficient time for the assessment of applications, which is expected to take approximately 30 weeks, and for their institution to make appropriate arrangements for their release following notification of any award. Accordingly the proposed start date of an award should be no earlier than 9 months after submission, although applicants are advised to allow longer if possible. The earliest start dates for the first Fellowships will be September/October 2010; applicants wishing to start at this time are advised to submit their applications by end of October 2009 in order to allow sufficient time for the peer review of their application.

Can I resubmit a previously unsuccessful Research Leave application to the Fellowships scheme?

Due to the differences between the Research Leave and Fellowships schemes, we would expect any previous application to be significantly re-worked to meet the aims and criteria of the Fellowships scheme. The application would therefore be treated as a new submission.

How often can I apply to the scheme?

Holders of Fellowship awards cannot apply again until three years after the submission of their Final Report.

Applicants are permitted to have only one application under consideration in the Fellowship scheme at any one time.

Are there other options I should consider before applying to the Fellowship scheme?

You are advised to read the scheme guidelines carefully before preparing an application for an AHRC Fellowship to check that what you want to do will meet the requirements of the scheme. You should also discuss your plans within your institution at an early stage to ensure that your application will have their support. If you are in doubt as to whether what you plan will fit the scheme, AHRC staff will be happy to provide advice.

In developing the new Fellowships scheme the AHRC considered carefully other major schemes that are on offer and designed the new scheme to complement and add value to existing provision as far as possible. Therefore, before preparing an application you may wish to consider whether the AHRC Fellowship scheme is the most appropriate route to seek funding for your research. One issue you should consider is whether your research is most appropriately undertaken through a Fellowship rather than a collaborative research grant. Another issue to consider is whether your research is at a sufficiently well-developed stage to be taken forward through an AHRC Fellowship or whether it needs further development prior to submitting an application. Some institutions and other funders (for example, the British Academy's Research Development Awards [BARDA] scheme) provide funding to support the early stage development of research ideas which might be appropriate to pursue prior to an AHRC Fellowship application.

Finally, you may wish to consider whether other Fellowship schemes might be more appropriate in your circumstances. For example, the AHRC's Fellowships in the Creative and Performing Arts and Knowledge Transfer Fellowships may be more appropriate for some applicants. Similarly, early career applicants who do not hold a permanent academic post and are seeking longer periods of support may wish to consider whether other schemes, such as the British Academy's Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme or the

Leverhulme Trust's Early Career Fellowships, might better suit their circumstances and needs. It is not possible to list here all the alternative options that may be available but your institution's research office may be able to provide advice on other funding schemes that it may be appropriate for you to consider.

2. Information on the new AHRC Fellowship Scheme

What are the aims of the AHRC Fellowship scheme?

The aims of the AHRC Fellowship scheme are:

- to provide arts and humanities researchers with additional focused research time to undertake research meeting world-class standards of scholarship, originality, quality and significance;
- to support, in partnership with institutions, the research career development of outstanding early career, mid-career and senior arts and humanities researchers;
- to facilitate the production of a wide range of research outputs that will lead to significant advances in knowledge, understanding or insights of interest and value both to the research community and to other potential users and beneficiaries, as appropriate;
- to maximise the impact of the research supported by promoting appropriate engagement, networking, communication, dissemination and, where appropriate, knowledge transfer activities, both with the research community and in other contexts where the research has the potential to make a difference.

What is the difference between the AHRC Research Leave scheme and the new AHRC Fellowship scheme?

There are many differences but in particular the new Fellowship scheme provides much more flexible support for research than the Research Leave scheme did. This increased flexibility includes: the duration and time commitment to the Fellowship; the range of research approaches and activities that can be included and of outputs that may be produced; the nature of the institutional support provided; and the funds that can be requested to support research activities and communication and impact plans. In addition, there is more explicit provision and expectation of institutional support for early career researchers.

How will applications be assessed?

The new peer review processes that have recently been implemented for the Research Grants standard route and a number of other schemes following the AHRC's review of its decision-making structures will apply to the Fellowships scheme. Applications will be assessed by three members of our Peer Review College selected in the light of the research topic and discipline areas specified by the applicant. Applicants whose proposals pass the quality threshold will then have a chance to respond to peer reviewers' comments. Applications will then be considered by one of four prioritisation panels (selected on the basis of the principal subject area identified in the application) which will moderate between the peer reviewers' comments, consider the applicants' responses and agree which applications are priorities for funding. The assessment process for an application will take approximately 30 weeks. In a small number of cases, for example where panels request additional peer review advice, applications may take longer to process; in such cases AHRC will contact applicants to inform them of the delay. Further details on the assessment and peer review of applications can be found in Section 5 of our Research Funding Guide:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Documents/Research%20Funding%20Guide.pdf>

What are the likely success rates?

AHRC has allocated a budget of £8m per annum to the new Fellowships scheme to enable it to support outstanding proposals meeting world-class standards of scholarship, originality, quality and significance. This is a significant increase on recent funding levels for the Research Leave scheme and reflects the flexibility in the new scheme for applications to request longer periods of funding.

Although it is difficult to predict accurately the demand for this new scheme and the likely success rates, we expect the new scheme to generate significant interest and that funding for the Fellowships will be highly competitive. In planning for the scheme our expectation was that success rates would be similar to those under the Research Grants standard route and recent rounds of the Research Leave scheme. Currently this would mean a success rate of between 10% and 20% although the actual figure will depend on a range of factors including the number of applications received and average costs of successful awards.

How are other AHRC Fellowship schemes affected by these changes?

Initially AHRC's Fellowships in the Creative and Performing Arts scheme will continue as a separate strand within the Fellowships scheme with its own budgetary allocation. In the longer term, the AHRC intends to explore the potential to integrate this strand more fully into the open Fellowship scheme. AHRC's Knowledge Transfer Fellowships will continue as at present. Other AHRC Fellowship schemes in partnership with other funders (such as the British Academy/AHRC/ESRC Visiting Fellowships for the Middle East and South Asia) are also not affected. Over time we intend to consider opportunities to build Fellowships into thematic initiatives. Such Fellowships may take a variety of forms depending on the specific aims of the initiative.

How will AHRC monitor and evaluate Fellowship awards?

The research organisation will have an important role to play in monitoring and supporting progress of Fellowships as they progress and plans for this should be included within applications along with any appropriate milestones.

The AHRC is currently reviewing its final reporting arrangements, and full details of the reporting and evaluation arrangements will be confirmed in due course. However, we anticipate that fellows will be expected to complete a report within 3 months of the end date of the award confirming completion of the proposed outputs, possibly including relevant supporting materials such as copies of articles or abstracts of books submitted for review or publication. The AHRC may request copies of the full manuscripts in some cases and/or follow up on publications or outcomes at a later date. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the AHRC may withhold payment of the final claim on awards until a satisfactory report confirming production of the planned outputs has been received and/or may reduce the value of the award in cases of late reports or failure to deliver adequately the specified outputs from a Fellowship.