

## BRITISH ACADEMY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME

### – APPLICATION GUIDANCE –

#### a. Overview

The aim of the British Academy in making these awards is to offer opportunities for outstanding early career researchers to strengthen their experience of research and teaching in a university environment which will develop their curriculum vitae and improve their prospects of obtaining permanent lecturing posts by the end of the Fellowship. The primary emphasis is on completion of a significant piece of publishable research, which will be assisted by full membership of an academic community of established scholars working in similar fields. It is estimated that about 45 fellowships will be awarded.

#### b. Eligibility criteria

- Applicants must be supported by the UK host institution in which they wish to hold the Fellowship. The scheme requires you to have a mentor within your proposed Faculty. Contact the academic you would like to be your **mentor** to ask them if they would be prepared to undertake this role as soon as you can.
- Applicants must be within three years of the award of a doctorate (for the 2017-2018 competition this means either already having been awarded a doctoral degree following a viva voce examination held on or after 1 April 2015; or having a reasonable expectation that they will have submitted and had their thesis examined by 1 April 2018)
- No applicant who has been appointed to a permanent academic post in an institution of higher education at any time in his or her career will be eligible.
- Applicants must be a UK or EEA national, or have completed a doctorate at a UK university. Any applicant who does not fall into one of these categories must demonstrate a strong prior association with the UK academic community, for example through already having been employed in a temporary capacity (longer than six months) at a UK university
- **\*NEW\*** individuals will only be able to re-apply to the scheme if they are specifically invited to do so by the British Academy (usually if they proceeded to the second stage but did then not receive an award, or if they were on the reserve lists for either stage). Applicants should therefore think carefully about whether this is the best year for them to apply.

#### c. Application process

The British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (BA PDF) scheme runs every year, with the application process opening in the summer. It is a two-stage process: applicants are invited to submit a project proposal by early October which will be assessed by a review panel. By the end of January in the following year, applicants will be advised if their application has succeeded to the second stage. At the second stage, applicants required to submit a piece of written research, a budget (completed by facilitators) and a justification on how the overall research expenses of £6,000 are going to be spent. Only minor corrections to the project

proposal are permissible at this stage. After completion of these steps, usually by the first week of March, the prospective head of departments are then required to submit their statement of support for the application. It is expected that applicants are advised according to the outcome of their application by the end of May for a beginning of the fellowship by September 1 at the earliest.

#### **d. Application Guidance**

The procedure outlined here applies to applications made through the Humanities Division. *If you expect to be based in the History Faculty, you should contact Aileen Mooney, Research Development Officer, at [rdo@history.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rdo@history.ox.ac.uk), who will advise you on your application. Applicants to Departments outside the Humanities Division should contact the Administrator of the relevant Department for advice on how to proceed.*

The scheme requires you to have a mentor within your proposed Faculty. Contact the academic you would like to be your **mentor** to ask them if they would be prepared to undertake this role as soon as you can.

Each faculty will run an expression of interest stage toward the end of TT/over summer. Please check their website and submit the required materials at the time of the specified deadline.

Once approved, the research facilitator responsible for your faculty will be in touch to guide you through the process. The team will be running a one-day workshop in early September, and we will also hold surgery sessions during September. Please check our divisional website for updates as well.

<http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/british-academy-postdoctoral-fellowships>

*You are not required to arrange a college association in principle at the outline application stage (this will happen if you are invited to the second stage of the competition in early 2016).*

#### **e. Drafting your proposal**

Start to think about how you will present yourself and your planned project in your Fellowship application in detail (your aims, your methodology, publication plans, the timetable you will work to during the Fellowship) and discuss your plans with your mentor, your referees and other colleagues.

Focus on the following fields of the application form (note that the form will be available from late-August):

- research programme (8,000 characters, inclusive of spaces, or approximately 1100 words)
- plan of action (3,000 characters inclusive of spaces, or approximately 400 words)
- previous research section (3,000 characters)

**Read the British Academy's Notes of Guidance for the scheme carefully (again, when this is available on e-GAP2 in late-August), and the rubrics set out on the application form. Bear these in mind at all times when drafting your application.**

In the research programme section, you should ensure that you have clearly described the research objectives or questions, research context, methodology and the significance of your proposed project. In the plan of action section, set out a timetable for the research over the course of three years that is both feasible and realistic.

Bear in mind that the scheme is fiercely competitive; you will need to demonstrate that you have the potential to develop a long-term academic career, both in your previous track record and in the quality of the research project you are proposing.

**Register on e-gap2 and create an application document.** All applications are prepared and submitted online. In order to create an application document for the scheme, you should register on the e-gap system by going to <https://egap.britac.ac.uk> and follow the on-screen instructions: click on ‘schemes’, then click ‘apply now’ next to the ‘Postdoctoral Fellowships Outline’ heading.

**Choose and contact your referee** (normally your external examiner) to check that they will be able to provide a reference for you online by the relevant deadline (which is normally several days after the deadline for receipt of applications by the Academy. Your application will be ineligible if references are not received by the date set by the Academy.

Ask your referee if they are registered on e-gap2, and if so obtain the email address they used to register so this can be entered onto the relevant section of your application form. **If they have not previously registered on the site, they should do so before you enter their contact details onto your application form.** It is important that you do not inadvertently create a second user account for them by entering an alternative email address for them (for example a college address rather than a Faculty address) not yet registered on the e-gap2 system.

In addition to the workshop and surgery sessions, facilitators will be able to advise on the form, how to complete the various sections, and read and comment on at least one full draft if submitted to us on time (mid-September, tbc). You should also share a draft of your application with your mentor, your PhD supervisor, or other colleagues in your field, and ask for feedback.

#### **f. Submission.**

Once you have completed the application, your facilitator will check the application one last time to see whether everything has been filled in correctly. Only when your facilitator asks you to submit should you login and press “submit”. The application is then immediately routed to Oxford’s Research Services department, who will arrange for institutional approval and then submit the application to the British Academy prior to the external deadline. Applicants must submit their application for institutional approval via e-GAP2 at least 5 working days before the BA deadline (tbc).

## **How to write good proposals**

This section provides an overview of the features assessors look for in a good application, broken down into three sections: the applicant's track record; the research project; and the accessibility of the proposal.

### *Applicant's track record*

The applicant:

- has used their previous doctoral, postdoctoral and other training and research opportunities well, leading to tangible and substantial research results.
- demonstrates from the description of their previous research that they have their own ideas, and that they are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the work that needs to be done.
- is at an advantage if they have a (good) publication record, but due regard will be given to career stage, and to the description of doctoral work given in the previous research section in order to judge potential; Fellowships are occasionally awarded to those without a prior publication record.

### *Research project*

The research proposal:

- is of outstanding quality and potential importance. Assessors focus more on what the project will do for the discipline rather than what the Fellowship will do for the applicant's career. The question asked is 'what will do the subject good?'
- describes a new project to be undertaken by the researcher. A proposal which is *very* closely linked, through a major theme or by specific source material, for example, to the doctorate, can be viewed as unambitious. In no circumstances should the proposal be the 'book of the thesis'. However, it is to be expected for the new project to have grown out of work carried out during the doctorate in some way.
- demonstrates a broad intellectual context for the research, with specific research issues/questions that are sufficiently well focussed to be achievable during the Fellowship.
- has a publication plan which is appropriate for the project and for the discipline and is realistic at this stage. The key is to show how you are going to shape and focus the material over three years.
- describes briefly why the chosen host institution is an appropriate place to conduct the research. Remaining at an appropriate institution does not need to be specifically justified.
- (for interdisciplinary proposals) shows that the planned research is/will be genuinely embedded in all the relevant research areas; it is clear that the proposal is genuinely interdisciplinary and not just making overtures to interdisciplinarity.

## *Accessibility*

The research proposal:

- is structured so as to clearly and logically conduct the reader into the intricacies of the planned research given the space available. The abstract is a key part of making the application accessible.
- is clear about what research needs to be done and why, what the research context is, and how the research will be conducted.
- is self-contained (it should not be necessary for the assessors to refer to materials outside the application in order to make their assessment).
- avoids jargonistic language where possible (assessors will mark applicants down if they feel the language obscures the key research questions, ideas and issues). Overly rhetorical declarations about the importance of the research or the track record of the applicant are not advisable: the quality of the applicant and the proposal should speak for itself.

## *BA Humanities Sections*

H1 Classical Antiquity (Chair: Professor Chris Carey)

H2 Theology and Religious Studies (Chair: Professor Gillian Clark)

H3 Africa, Asia and the Middle East (Chair: Professor Clive Holes)

H4 Linguistics and Philology (Chair: Professor Aditi Lahiri)

H5 Early Modern Languages and Literatures to 1830 (Chair: Professor Michael Moriarty)

H6 Modern Languages, Literatures and other Media from 1830 (Chair: Professor Celia Britton)

H7 Archaeology (Chair: Professor Graeme Barker)

H8 Medieval Studies (Chair: Professor Helen Cooper)

H9 Early Modern History to 1850 (Chair: Professor Lyndal Roper)

H10 Modern History from 1850 (Chair: Professor Joanna Bourke)

H11 History of Art and Music (Chair: Professor Craig Clunas)

H12 Philosophy (Chair: Professor Jane Heal)

Culture, Media and Performance (CMP) Ginger Group (Chair: Professor Georgina Born)