

## ESRC Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme FAQs



### Contents

Dates and eligibility.....	2
Costing and resources.....	2
Mentoring .....	3
Selection process .....	3
Visa questions .....	4
Other matters .....	4

The objective of this call is to enhance the capacity of early career researchers to engage with the GCRF, and we will fund approximately 25 GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowships in this first pilot year. Five of these awards will be allocated to the University of Oxford.

Fellows' actual programmes should reflect their prior knowledge and experience, but should include the following types of activity:

- Ensuring ODA compliance within proposed fellowship activities (see 'ODA Compliance' section on page 4)
- Engage with both academic and non-academic audiences to communicate the research findings that have come out of their previous doctoral work
- Build international networks with both academic and user audiences to develop impact opportunities and inform and support the further development of their research
- Collaborate with users through an internship or placement to help develop their professional and transferrable skills and understanding of users' organisations and their needs
- Produce publications in order to help establish a track record in their chosen specialisation and secure opportunities for long term employment in research
- Further improve their research and related skills through additional specialised training, e.g. language training, methodological skills, cultural awareness (such as socio-economic and political structures and cultural, historical and religious dynamics)
- Share learning gained through their fellowship with their DTC and the ESRC
- Carry out further limited research (no more than 25 per cent of time commitment) based on their DPhil and related work through developing proposals for further funding. **NOTE: New unrelated research may not be undertaken during a GCRF Fellowship.**

Updated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016

Proposals are welcome from any disciplinary field, but the fellowship activities must be based at least 50 per cent within the social sciences. We encourage applicants to address the [thematic priorities](#) identified by ESRC, although applicants are not limited to these.

## Dates and eligibility

### 1. What is the latest possible start date for the fellowship?

The ESRC have indicated that fellowships should commence by 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017. ESRC also agreed that in some instances where visas are required there might be a degree of further slippage (beyond 9<sup>th</sup> January).

### 2. Eligibility criteria: What are the key dates for the calculation of eligibility?

The ESRC call says 'The awards are restricted to those with no more than three years active postdoctoral experience at the start date of the award.'

The relevant dates for eligibility are:

- The date of the DPhil viva (providing it resulted in a pass or in minor corrections)
  - The date for the intended start of the award (to be chosen by the applicant and entered on the application form) which should be between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017.
- So the period between those dates should be less than three years (although the ESRC notes that "*in calculating 'active' experience we will make allowance for periods where the applicant has interrupted their career for family, health or other personal reasons.*").

### 3. I am in the final stages of my DPhil and am planning to submit my thesis in October. This means that I will not have had my viva by the application deadline of 9th September. Would I still be eligible to apply?

Applicants need to have had their viva (and passed or received minor corrections) by the application deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> September. This is in order that when the panel meet to review applications and make their recommendations, that all applications are at that time, eligible for consideration.

### 4. Are there any nationality/citizenship criteria?

No.

### 5. Are applicants eligible if they are in a Department outside of Social Sciences Division?

Yes if their research falls within the ESRC remit.

## Costing and resources

### 6. What is the value of the fellowship?

The total costing of the fellowship, including indirect and estates costs, must be within £125k at 100% fEC. As usual, the ESRC will provide 80% fEC (i.e. £100k). Departments must make up that shortfall, and therefore must approve your application.

Departments are advised to ensure that mentoring costs of up to two hours per week are included in the bid.

**7. Are Departments required to submit full X5 costing to University Research Services for each application under this scheme as for standard ESRC grant/fellowship applications?**

Given that the fellowship is paid for at 80% fEC, we expect that departments want to do an X5 costing so that they know what their liability is for this, what that 20% fEC shortfall is. An X5 output will also help to populate the Summary Resources boxes in the word table, which does include estates and indirect costs, which is required in the information to be submitted by 9<sup>th</sup> September. An X5 costing will definitely be required for the five successful applications, which will be submitted on JeS.

## Mentoring

**8. Does the proposed mentor have to be in the same department as the applicant?**

The ESRC require that all GCRF Fellows have a Mentor based in Oxford. This should be a person with *“experience and a strong interest in the applicant’s field of research, but should not normally be the applicant’s doctoral Supervisor”*. Many of our departments strongly prefer that the Mentor is within the same hosting department as the applicant. If your chosen Mentor is from outside your hosting department, then it may be questioned whether you are applying through the most appropriate department, given ESRC requirement that the Mentor is experienced in your field. Departments are advised to ensure that mentoring costs of up to two hours per week are included in the bid.

**9. Is it acceptable if the proposed mentor is also the Head of Department?**

There is no restriction in the guidelines to suggest that the Head of Department cannot also be the applicant’s Mentor. However, the Head of Department Statement and the Mentor Statement and CV will still have to be produced, as these documents are asking different questions. Bear in mind how feasible it might be for a Head of Department to devote two hours a week to mentoring one post-doctoral fellow within the department.

Note that the DPhil Supervisor can be the Mentor, or the Referee, but cannot be both. So if the Head of Department is also the proposed Mentor, then the applicant will need a separate Referee.

## Selection process

**10. Will the ESRC be selecting the final fellows?**

No the selection of the five fellows will be done by the University panel, and the ESRC will then be notified.

**11. Who will be on the selection panel?**

Not yet confirmed but the panel is likely to be made up of academic staff from the departments putting forward applicants. Officers will assist the panel in providing opinions on whether proposals are ODA compliant.

## Visa questions

### 12. I am a USA national. Will I be able to get a visa on the basis of the fellowship award?

As with other Fellowship awards, once you have been awarded the Fellowship, you will be required to apply for a visa.

### 13. I hold a spousal visa that limits the amount of travel outside the UK that I can do. Can I design my travel plans for the fellowship to fit in with this?

Yes.

## Other matters

### 14. Will proposals that involve travel to places considered dangerous by the FCO be considered?

The call document says *“All travel must be subject to FCO advice”*. A proposal involving travel to countries listed by the FCO should include information about the justification for this, and the measures to be taken to ensure safety. We would expect the application to include a justification for why travel to these countries is necessary. It is up to the Head of Department to approve this travel when the Travel Risk Assessment is undertaken, which is reviewed by the Safety Office. It is worth getting an agreement in principle from the Head of Department at the time of application.

There are two elements included in the robust Risk Assessment. Firstly the academic justification/merit of why the research needs to be undertaken in that country, does it add to the current body of evidence? And secondly, the arrangements and measures in place to reduce and mitigate against the risk and demonstrate it can be undertaken safely. These will be reviewed and agreed prior to agreement to travel.

### 15. Does the 25% time for new research need to be continuous?

No. The workplan should demonstrate that no more than 25% of total time will be dedicated to new research, and that research proposed must not be unrelated to previous research/the DPhil.

### 16. Can I hold a contract to do teaching at the same time as holding the fellowship?

No. The fellowship should occupy 100% of your full working week, whether that is full time or part time. Fellowships are designed for full time or *“for applicants whose normal working hours are part time and not for applicants who wish to hold the fellowship and continue other employment.”*

You can plan in your workplan to do some teaching or other non-research activity. The call states that *“a limited amount of teaching and other non-research activities will contribute to the professional development of the fellow, and therefore award holders can set aside up to eight hours per week to other duties during the fellowship, including preparation time.”*

### 17. Can I have an Advisory Group attached to this project?

An Advisory Group is usually a tool used in a more complex management structure than you would require for a fellowship. However, given the interdisciplinary nature of the project, a group of advisors from the breadth of disciplines covered, would be a useful addition to your mentor.

**18. Can my Referee also be in the Advisors group?**

Your referees should be independent of the project to remove any conflict of interest that might arise where it could be thought they had something to gain from providing a favourable reference.

**19. Do I repeat in the application form what I have already said in the case for support, for instance in the impact sections?**

No, this is an opportunity to provide additional information. The objectives of the fellowship will not change. In the applications form you need to explain why they are important objectives, and in the case for support you would expand on them and link them to the activities and outputs you are delivering. The beneficiaries on the form refers to academic beneficiaries. The Impact summary on the form is asking who will benefit from this research in a non-academic context and in what way (economically, socially). The impact section in the case for support then details what activities you will undertake in order to achieve that benefit.