

Early Career Fellowships Guidance for Applicants 2025

The Leverhulme Trust Board, through its Research Awards Advisory Committee, is offering approximately 145 Fellowships in 2025. These can be held at UK universities with research degree awarding powers and provide career development opportunities for researchers with a proven record of research. The Fellowships are intended to assist those at a relatively early stage of their academic careers, and it is hoped that the appointment would lead to a more permanent position for the individual, either within the same or another university. The objective is for Fellows to undertake a significant piece of publishable research during the tenure of the award, and the project put forward should therefore not be a reworking or mere extension of the candidate's doctoral research project. Applicants should ensure that the proposed research activities can realistically be achieved within the period of the Fellowship.

Eligible applicants

- Applicants **must not yet have held a full-time permanent academic post in a UK university or comparable UK institution**, nor may Fellows hold such a post concurrently with the Early Career Fellowship. The Trust will consider applications from candidates whose permanent post does not include any research. Those in receipt of a stipendiary Fellowship may not hold this at the same time as an Early Career Fellowship.
- All candidates must hold a doctorate by the time they take up the Fellowship. Those who are or have been registered for a doctorate at any time may apply only if they have **submitted their doctoral thesis for viva voce examination by the closing date of 4pm on 20 February 2025**. Those who at the time of commencing the Fellowship are registered for or are intending to register for degrees, professional or vocational qualifications are not eligible.
- All candidates must have submitted their doctoral thesis for viva voce examination not more than four years prior to the application closing date. Hence **those who formally submitted their doctoral thesis for viva voce examination before 20 February 2021 are not eligible unless they have since had a career break**. Those wishing to make a case for a career break should present the case for interruption by a period of maternity leave, family commitments, illness, or other exceptional circumstances. Please note that time spent working outside academia does not qualify as a career break.
- Applicants must **either** hold a degree (any degree) from a UK higher education institution at the time of taking up the Fellowship **or** at the time of the application deadline must hold an academic position in the UK (e.g. fixed-term lectureship, fellowship) which commenced no

less than 4 months prior to the closing date. Hence, **those who do not hold a UK degree and whose UK academic position commenced after October 2024 are not eligible.** The Trust will consider candidates without a UK degree whose UK academic post commenced after October 2024 if they have been in continuous UK academic employment for more than 4 months prior to the deadline. The intention is to support the career development of those building an academic career within the UK.

- **Candidates who have held or currently hold postdoctoral positions to pursue their own independent research totalling 3 or more years are not eligible to apply.**
- The Research Awards Advisory Committee believes that the development of an academic career is best served by gaining experience at different institutions. Applicants who have not already moved institutions in the course of their academic career (i.e. between their undergraduate university and proposed host university) should nominate a new host university, or otherwise demonstrate clear evidence of the academic and/or personal reasons for remaining at the same university, such as access to highly specialist equipment or a highly specialised research team.
- The matching funding contributed by the host university must be drawn from generally available funds and cannot be associated with any other grants received by the university. The host department must secure the matching funding for the applicant before the closing date and it must be specifically allocated to the individual concerned. Applications that do not meet these conditions are ineligible and will be rejected.
- A candidate may submit only one application per year. Previously unsuccessful applicants can reapply.
- Candidates may not apply for both an Early Career Fellowship and a Study Abroad Studentship in the same year.
- Candidates who have held a Leverhulme Study Abroad Studentship for postdoctoral research are not eligible to apply for an Early Career Fellowship. Candidates should consider carefully which of these two schemes best suit their requirements. Please note, this only applies to the 2019 award schemes onwards.

Eligible fields

Applications will be considered in all subject areas with the following exceptions:

- studies of disease, illness and disabilities in humans and animals
- research that is intended to inform clinical practice or the development of medical applications

There are two reasons for this: substantial funding is available from other sources for applied medical research; the Trust's priority is to support investigations of a fundamental nature.

Place of tenure

The Fellowships are tenable in UK universities with research degree awarding powers. Early Career Fellows are employees of the host university and subject to that university's terms and conditions of employment.

The Fellow must be resident in the UK for the duration of the Fellowship.

If awarded a Fellowship, a request to transfer the place of tenure will normally only be considered where there is clear evidence of career development opportunities and such requests are very unlikely to be approved unless the Fellow has been in post for at least one year at the time of the transfer. Requests to transfer an award prior to take up of a post will not be considered.

Duration and timing

The awards are tenable for 36 months and are not renewable. A Fellowship must commence between 1 September 2025 and 1 May 2026. The Trust will support requests to hold the award part-time over a proportionately longer period for health related reasons, disability or childcare commitments. Those holding the Fellowship part-time may not undertake any other employment during the period of the award.

Research funds

In recognition of the prestige of these awards and to enable the Fellow's research, up to £6000 a year will be available for research expenses. It is not possible to claim more than £6000 in year one, but any funds not used or claimed can be carried over or claimed in later years (e.g. if you use £5000 in year one, up to £7000 will be available in year two).

The following are examples, rather than an exclusive list, of possible research expenditure: conference attendance, conference organisation (in the UK only), travel and subsistence for research trips in the UK or overseas, research assistance, laboratory consumables.

For UK and overseas subsistence (including accommodation) the Trust can contribute up to the HMRC maximum daily allowance for the fellow's destination. For visits over 21 days it is expected that the daily rate used will be lower than the maximum.

Capital items: essential items of equipment costing up to £1000 each are eligible; computer hardware items up to £2500 each are eligible (please note, the Trust expects the host department to provide standard computing equipment e.g. a desktop computer). You must justify each item, explaining its function and necessity for your research.

Essential book purchases up to £1000 per year are eligible.

Teaching

Teaching is not compulsory, although it is understood that the Early Career Fellow may wish to gain some teaching experience during their award period. However, as the primary purpose of the scheme is to enable the award holder to undertake a significant piece of publishable research, as described in the application, teaching should average no more than three hours per teaching week in term time. The Trust expects that the subjects taught would relate to the main thrust of the Fellow's research interests and not simply to the department's needs. The host department should take into account the amount of preparation time alongside the number of teaching hours. A modest amount of examining associated with any teaching undertaken is permissible, but if the Fellow is asked to undertake any administrative tasks, these should relate directly to the teaching and/or research (s)he does. The total time spent on teaching duties (i.e. preparation, teaching, examining, marking and administration) should not exceed one day per teaching week

in term time. It is important that an award holder's teaching does not hinder progress on his or her research project. The Fellow or head of department should provide the Trust with details of the Early Career Fellow's teaching duties at the start of each year or term.

Institutional commitments

The scheme is based on a pattern of joint support whereby the Leverhulme Trust will contribute 50% of the Fellow's total salary costs (including National Insurance, superannuation and London allowance, where applicable) up to a maximum of £28,000 in each year of the award, and the balance is to be contributed by the host university. The Trust's contribution in subsequent years will normally increase in line with pay awards and normal increments up to the annual maximum of £28,000. The Trust's maximum annual contribution will be pro-rated if the Fellowship is held on a part-time basis. Institutional approval by the host university is required as part of the application procedure, confirming that the necessary financial commitment can be made and providing details of the facilities with which the Fellow will be provided.

It is a condition that the host department has identified and secured the source of the matching funding for an applicant by the closing date, and that this is specifically allocated to the individual concerned. The matching funding contributed by the host university must be drawn from generally available funds and cannot be associated with any other grants received by the university.

Host departments should ensure that the starting salary has been agreed with the applicant prior to finalising the application, and that this is in line with the university's salary policy

Host departments must provide the candidate with their own computer and dedicated desk and/or laboratory space.

Host departments must also provide the candidate with the necessary computing equipment for working from home, where applicable.

Ineligible costs

The Leverhulme Trust cannot contribute towards institutional charges for accommodation or overheads. Please note that the Trust does not make awards on a full economic costing basis. Please consult paragraphs 3.31 to 3.37 of the Science & Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014, HM Treasury (July 2004), which explains arrangements for the provision of overheads linked to charity funding.

Application procedure

Applications can only be made via the Trust's Grants Management System. **Applications must be approved and submitted to the Trust by the host university by 4pm on 20 February 2025.** Institutional approval is required both from the head of the host department and from an administrative officer on behalf of the host university. Nominated referees will also be required to provide their references via the online system. Applicants will be informed of the result of their applications by email at the end of May 2025.

Please note that due to the large number of applications received to this scheme, it is not possible to provide feedback regarding the reasons for rejection to individual applicants.

Practising artists

Practising artists should provide online access to up to 12 images, or a short excerpt of their film or music, as appropriate. Please include the link to your work in your Detailed Statement of Proposed Research.

Application queries

Telephone: 020 7042 9863/9862/9861

Email: grants@leverhulme.ac.uk

General feedback on unsuccessful applications

Please see below for general feedback on common reasons previous applications were unsuccessful.

1. In many cases the proposed research is highly original and the application of excellent quality, but other applications are ranked more highly, and funds are limited.
2. The proposed research project does not demonstrate sufficient progression from the applicant's doctoral thesis.
3. In instances where the applicant has not moved during their academic career (between their undergraduate degree and their proposed ECF host university), the explanation of academic and/or personal reasons for this is unclear.
4. The proposed research project requires a team approach and the individual's contribution and responsibilities are not clearly identified.
5. The description of the research project is too general.
6. It is not clear that the applicant possesses the skills required to successfully deliver the proposed project.
7. The application includes overblown claims to originality and/or fails to reference previous work in the research area.
8. The potential contribution of the project to the wider research area is not adequately addressed.
9. Insufficient attention is paid to potential mitigations in high-risk research proposals.
10. The research methodology is not as clearly articulated as the project description.
11. The research methodology is overly technical without a clear rationale in relation to the project as a whole.
12. The extent to which highly technical research methodologies are innovative within their field of research is not made explicit.
13. The proposal is unrealistic regarding what is achievable within the duration of the Fellowship.
14. The applicant makes unfounded claims to interdisciplinarity.
15. The applicant makes unfounded claims of originality.
16. Applications using interdisciplinary methodologies lack awareness of approaches centred within other disciplines.