

# International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF)

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## Early Career Fellowships in Research and Innovation 2023/24

### Guidelines for applicants for UK Universities and Research Institutions

Call opens on 21 November 2023

Call closes on 8 January 2024, 10:00 a.m. (UK time)

International Science Partnerships Fund

Applicant Guidelines

Version 2.0

Overview of change(s) from previous version

<b>Change</b>	<b>Page in v 1.0</b>	<b>Page in version 2.0</b>
Singapore removed as partner country	4 & 6	-

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## 1. Background

The International Science Partnerships Fund ([ISPF](#)) is designed to enable potential and foster prosperity. It puts research and innovation at the heart of our international relationships, supporting UK researchers and innovators to work with peers around the world on the on the major themes of our time: planet, health, tech, and talent:

- **Healthy People, Animals and Plants** – Researching and innovating for secure and healthy populations.
- **Resilient Planet** - Leading the green industrial revolution to protect the planet.
- **Tomorrow's Talent** – Nurturing talent to drive inclusion, research, and innovation.
- **Transformative Technologies** - Developing responsible technologies to secure our place in tomorrow's world.

## 2. About the Opportunity

The British Council through the ISPF will provide funding to selected UK Universities and Research institutions under this fellowship scheme. The scheme will fund a minimum of three Early Career Fellowships covering all academic and living expenses.

We anticipate that the grant will support medium-long term partnerships between the hosting and sending institutions, contributing to research capacity strengthening at both individual and institutional levels, alongside support for the individual researcher. Successful proposals will demonstrate the short-medium term mutual benefit as well as plans for institutional collaboration past the fellowship term. One of the key objectives of this fellowship scheme is to nurture talent to drive inclusion in Research & Innovation (R&I). Early Career Fellowships are specifically designed to widen participation and to support the careers of researchers from a variety of backgrounds, including those whose backgrounds are underrepresented in their research field. This opportunity is available to early career researchers who have not yet held a full-time research-related post or academic post with a research specific element, who wish to have a research experience at a UK university or research institution. This could include converting their doctoral work into publications or other academic outputs and establishing new research relationships.

## 3. Objectives

Grants under the British Council ISPF programme allow fellows to collaborate internationally, and gain access to new research environments, facilities, knowledge, and expertise, in order to enhance the quality of their research environments and enable them to translate research and innovation into economic and societal benefit. The Early Career Fellowship Programme focuses on the Tomorrow's Talent ISPF theme and has the following objectives:

- Provide the selected early career researchers with a foundation to launch their careers in research and innovation.
- To widen participation by increasing the number of opportunities for researchers including those whose backgrounds are underrepresented in their research field, and who have not yet held a full-time research-related post or academic post with a research specific element.

- The scheme will have a focus on inclusivity: it will provide up and coming researchers with a foundation to launch their careers, creating lasting benefits to the fellow and both the UK and the international partner country research communities through sustainable collaboration. Establish collaboration between hosting and sending institutions on one of the ISPF themes.

#### 4. Eligible Countries/Territories

This opportunity is open to early career researchers who are based in the countries/territories listed below:

ODA	Non-ODA
Brazil	Taiwan
Egypt	
Indonesia	
Malaysia	
Philippines	
Thailand	
Vietnam	

When submitting a proposal for a cohort in a country/territory which is eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend, UK Universities and Research Institutions should ensure that the Fellowships comply with UK legislation concerning the use of ODA funds.

ISPF activities funded using ODA budget need to demonstrate that they are aiming to contribute to a reduction in poverty and aim to further sustainable development (development that is likely to generate lasting benefits for the population of the country/territory to which it is provided) or improve the welfare of vulnerable and low-income populations.

Fellowships proposed should address development needs which are specific to the country where the cohort is from, target the economic development and social welfare of the country/territory. Programmes which have the potential for military use or promote security interests are not eligible for ODA funding and should not be included in proposals for fellowships in ODA-eligible countries/territories.

UK Law requires that all ODA funds should be spent in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender. UK Universities and Research Institutions will be asked to consider the following questions about the fellowships and their research area selected for consideration:

- How will ensure gender equality and fairness in selecting and proposing hosting supervisors?
- How will you ensure fair selection processes for people of different genders?

Programmes that could have a negative impact on gender equality will not be funded.

## 5. Opportunity for UK Universities and Research Institutions

The British Council through the ISPF programme will provide funding to selected UK Universities and Research institutions under this fellowship scheme. The scheme will fund a minimum of three Early Career Fellowships covering all academic and living expenses.

Grants under this programme allow fellows to collaborate internationally, and gain access to new research environments, facilities, knowledge, and expertise, in order to enhance the quality of their research environments and enable them to translate research and innovation into economic and societal benefit.

The ISFP fund has 4 themes under which we will establish the Early Career Fellowship programme:

- **Healthy People, Animals and Plants** – Researching and innovating for secure and healthy populations.
- **Resilient Planet** - Leading the green industrial revolution to protect the planet.
- **Tomorrow's Talent** – Nurturing talent to drive inclusion, research and innovation in research capacity, research systems and research pipeline.
- **Transformative Technologies** - Developing responsible technologies to secure our place in tomorrow's world.

## 6. Budget and Cohorts

Each **cohort has a value of £180,000** which the British Council through the ISPF programme will pay as a grant to the universities or research institutions selected for that cohort.

For each cohort, the universities and research institutions will select applicants to be recipients of full fellowship (with an average value of £60,000 per fellow).

Should additional funding become available during the application process, the British Council may increase the total funding allocated to some of the cohorts, and subsequently increase the number of expected fellowships allocated.

The Grant is not transferable, and any underspend will need to be returned to the British Council. Universities and research institutions may apply to any of the Fellow cohorts below. When applying each institution must establish their order of preference in the application form.

The distribution of these cohorts will depend on geographic priorities and quality of applications. The country cohorts available are the following:

## 6.1 Cohorts for Fellowship programmes

<b>ODA Cohorts</b>	<b>Main Requirements</b>	<b>Additional Requirements</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The proposed fellowship programme must come from the following thematic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity and climate change</li> <li>• Protection of traditional communities</li> <li>• Urban challenges across the Legal Amazon</li> <li>• Bioeconomy to promote a new model of development</li> </ul>	<p>To support the goals set by the Amazonia+10 Initiative, candidates must be selected from the Legal Amazon/Amazônia Legal universities &amp; research centres. 'Legal Amazon' is the term used in Brazil to include all states with Amazonian land and the Amazon State.</p>
<b>Egypt</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant</p>	<p>Candidates must be selected from public universities and research centres.</p>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant.</p>	
<b>Malaysia</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant.</p>	
<b>Philippines</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant.</p>	
<b>Thailand</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant.</p>	
<b>Vietnam</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country. The research programmes must be ODA compliant.</p>	
<b>Non – ODA Cohorts</b>		
<b>Taiwan</b>	<p>Cohort must finance at least 3 fellows from the eligible country.</p>	<p>Applications will be prioritised under the theme of Net Zero and supporting Women in STEM</p>

## 7. Funding Available/Size of Grants

The Early Career Fellowships will be funded by a grant to the UK institutions of £180,000 from which three fellows should be supported. We welcome proposals from universities and research institutions with novel and creative ways to support fellows, possibly travelling with dependants, to ensure they derive the most benefit from their research period in the UK.

The costs for each fellow should include at a minimum:

- Minimum £27,979 per annum salary (postdoctoral intern, spine point 20 as of August 2023) plus relevant London weighting if applicable. This would be pro rata for fellowships shorter than 12 months. Where applicable, accompanying child allowance for fellows consistent with [UK visa requirements](#).<sup>1</sup> These rates are decided by the Home Office.
- £10,000 per 12 months (pro rata for shorter fellowships) for research related expenses. This can contribute to consumables, small equipment, travel and subsistence within the UK, publication costs, or other expenses related directly to the research project.
- Other allowable costs within the grant include:
  - IELTS exam fee if applicable (for fellows without a valid Test of English).
  - Return economy-class travel from home country to the UK (this will not reimburse costs of fares for dependants)
  - Visa and insurance / NHS surcharge costs
  - Ad hoc costs (heavy baggage allowance, etc.)
- No administrative fees or deposits can be charged to applicants or recovered from the grant.

## 8. UK Institutions Participation Criteria

- All participating institutions must be UK Higher Education Institutions or other UK institutions [eligible](#) to receive UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding.
- UK institutions should propose 6 to 12-month research fellowship programmes within each eligible subject area.
- If a fellowship lasts longer than one year, funding will be capped for the first year only. The costs of any subsequent years must be guaranteed and covered in full by the UK institution and to the same level as in year 1 with reasonable allowances for cost-of-living increases.
- UK hosting bodies will need to be able to sponsor short term visas, ideally under the Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) scheme, for temporary work (<https://www.gov.uk/government-authorized-exchange>). UK institutions should demonstrate how they will connect applicants with industry partners where relevant and provide opportunities for internships, placements, or networking for the fellows.
- UK institutions should demonstrate how they will support welfare and career development of applicants.

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<sup>1</sup> Further detail on request. For reference, fellow accompanied by their children should receive £680 p/month for each dependent underaged child. This amount increases to £845 p/month for institutions located in London. Candidates travelling with underage dependants will be subject to visa authorisations which are beyond British Council's area.

- UK institutions must ensure that their shortlisting and assessment panels are diverse in terms of gender, and any other protected equality characteristics. Panel members must take unconscious bias training. The British Council will carry out spot checks to ensure these requirements have been put in place.
- Provide added value to the overall research and welfare experience, including but not limited to:
  - Communications prior to arrival – including support for visa application, arrival to the UK etc.
  - Support for the international fellowship experience, including mentoring and welfare support.
  - Arranging accommodation or housing for the fellows
  - General information about adapting to living in the UK.
  - Opportunities for skills and career development – including links with industry and networking.
  - A nominated point of contact for any issues or concerns

## **9. How will the programme be managed?**

The British Council through the ISPF will pay £180,000 to selected UK institutions in February- March 2024 which will then be administered as a bursary to the selected fellows by the UK institution in the academic year 2024/25.

- The selected UK Institutions will advertise the opportunities and encourage applications to their selected programmes.
- The British Council will support with the wide promotion of the Fellowship programme in the eligible countries/territories.
- The UK institutions will manage the application process, submitting to the British Council a shortlist with the pre-selection of the fellows.
- UK institutions will be required to share all applicant data with the British Council – not only shortlisted applicants.
- The British Council will review and confirm to universities the final list of fellows.
- Once successful applicants have been confirmed by the British Council, the UK Institutions will administer the fellowship to each recipient in their cohort, covering all academic and living expenses.

The British Council may be able to increase the number of fellows available in each of the cohorts. This would take the form of additional grants of £60,000. Universities interested in hosting additional fellows should indicate this in their application form.

The UK Institutions selected to receive fellows will go through an eligibility check and shall then sign a Grant Agreement with the British Council. This Grant Agreement will detail all items to be funded, payment methods, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting requirements. A template Grant Agreement can be found in the Annexes of this Call.



## 10. Eligibility and selection of fellows

The following guidelines will be considered for the selection of fellows. Fellows must:

- Be a permanent resident of the eligible country/territory listed under section 3 – Eligible Countries/territories.
- Be an Early Career Researcher<sup>2</sup> and have a letter of acceptance from the hosting lab or department.
- Not currently in receipt of financial support or funding towards any other programme in the UK from any other sources.
- Meet the English language requirement of the UK HEI if applicable.
- Have a background or a proven interest in the proposed research area. Indicate their preference for research areas and institution in the case of applying to multiple institutions. Be willing to demonstrate future contribution to capacity-building and socio-economic advancement through the benefits achieved after completing the fellowship programme.
- Agree to maintain contact with the British Council for purposes of monitoring and evaluation during and after their fellowship.
- Demonstrate a plan and a passion to engage other early career researchers from their home country.
- Employees of the British Council, the UK government or Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish governments are not eligible to apply for this programme.

## 11. Fellowship branding

The fellowships will be branded as “Early Career Fellowships”. Branding guidelines will be included in the grant agreement.

## 12. Timeline

Please consider the following indicative timeline for the implementation of this programme:

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<sup>2</sup> Early Career Researchers (ECRs) have completed or are close to completion of their PhD, potentially waiting for their final viva voce examination, which must be passed prior to taking up the award. ECRs will not have held a permanent academic post or a post with a research-related element, or one which allowed them to supervise PhD students or submit research grants as a principal investigator. Time spent in teaching-only roles or academic related roles does not affect ECR status, provided no research element was part of the role. If a researcher does not hold a PhD but has research experience equivalent to a PhD holder and works in a field where a PhD is not a prerequisite for established research activity, they can still be considered eligible. Participants from for-profit organisations cannot be funded. As we move toward greater inclusivity for ECRs from a wide range of backgrounds, we are no longer counting years spent in a specific career stage. Career breaks and alternative trajectories to an early academic career are all considered outside the definition of career stage.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>21 November 2023</b>	Call opens for UK Higher Education Institution
<b>8 January 2024</b>	Deadline for submission of proposal by HEIs
<b>January 2024</b>	Panel assessments of proposals
<b>By 31 January 2024</b>	The British Council notifies institutions of results
<b>February-March 2024</b>	Grant agreements are signed between the British Council and participating institutions and grants are disbursed.
<b>March-April 2024</b>	Institutions to share promotional content to be used in overall marketing campaign.
<b>April 2024</b>	Launch of the Fellowship marketing campaigns in all eligible countries/territories listed in this call.
<b>April 2024</b>	Application to apply for the scheme is open for fellows. Universities to advertise scheme on their portals and share link with British Council
<b>30 June 2024</b>	Deadline for fellows to apply to the programme. The deadline is to be strictly followed by all successful Higher Education Institutions.
<b>By 15 July 2024</b>	Institutions submit shortlisted candidates to the British Council.
<b>By 31 July 2024</b>	British Council to confirm shortlisted candidates to HEIs. British Council to share Terms and Conditions document to be signed by selected fellows.
<b>By 12 August 2024</b>	Higher Education Institutions to make offer to selected fellows agreed with the British Council.
<b>By 30 August 2024</b>	HEIs to confirm receipt of signed copy of British Council Terms and Conditions from successful fellows.
<b>30 September 2024</b>	HEIs will submit a progress report (template issued by the British Council) to provide an update status on confirmed fellows, their details, and their expected arrival dates to the British Council.
<b>August - September 2024</b>	HEIs provide support to fellows for their arrival into the UK
<b>September / October / November 2024</b>	Programmes start in the UK

<b>29 November 2024</b>	Deadline for HEIs to report proof of enrolment in the Fellowship programme
<b>March 2025</b>	HEIs will submit an Interim report to the British Council and flag any issues with fellows at this time.
<b>October 2025</b>	HEIs will submit a final report to the British Council.

### 13. Selection criteria of UK Institutions

The following selection criteria will be used:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>%</b>
Evidence of a detailed plan to publicise the fellowship and disseminate the opportunity	25%
Holistic support offered to <b>applicants</b> and university’s commitment to EDI and Safeguarding values	25%
Added value to collaborative links between the UK institution and cohort country	10%
Professional/Industry and career development opportunities for the Fellows linked to programmes	25%
Track Record in administering similar schemes and fit within institutional expertise for research	15%
<b>ODA/SDG Relevance (where applicable)</b>	<b>Pass/fail</b>
<b>Adequate Safeguarding risk assessment for programme participants</b>	<b>Pass/fail</b>
<b>Gender Equality compliance (ODA only)</b>	<b>Pass/fail</b>

The British Council reserves the right to award the grant with consideration to the geographical spread of institutions across the UK and thematic priorities.

### 14. Call Deadline & How to Apply

To participate in this call, UK institutions are requested to complete the online Application Form and the Budget Templet Annex 1 by 8 January 2024 at 10.00 am (UK time). Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered for funding.

The deadline applies to all parts of your application, including upload of fully completed supporting documentation. Any applications which are not submitted in full by the deadline, with all required supporting documents, will be considered ineligible. Appeals against this decision will not be accepted.

## 15. Data Protection

The British Council will use the information that you provide for the purposes of processing your application, making any awards, monitoring, and review of any grants.

We will need to share necessary data with application reviewers and panel members contracted by the British Council, the funder UK Department of Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) and contracted external evaluators (as required).

The British Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 (EU) GDPR). We process and handle personal information according to these regulations. The personal information that you provide on this form will only be used for the processing of your application. The information will be viewed by British Council, and those who are part of the decision-making process. Your information will not be used/shared beyond the partners listed above for any other purpose without your specific consent. British Council reserve the right to publish and share anonymised aggregated information with stakeholders.

Organisation details, where collected, are used for monitoring and evaluation and statistical purposes. Gender information and country of origin, where collected, is used solely for statistical purposes. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided.

Under UK Data Protection law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you want more information about this, please contact your local British Council office or see our website:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection>

## Annexes & Links

Links to the draft grant agreement and other important and relevant British Council global policy statements:

- Annex 1 Budget Template
- [Draft Grant Agreement](#)
- [Sanctions, countering terrorist financing and anti-money laundering](#)
- [Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion](#)
- [Safeguarding Global Policy Statement](#)
- [Information security and privacy global policy statement](#)
- [Anti-fraud and corruption global policy statement](#)
- [Environmental Global Policy Statement](#)