Oxford Policy Engagement Network Fellowships 2024-25

Guidance for applicants

Contents

1. Summary

Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Fellowships enable academic and research staff from the University of Oxford to work closely with, or in, an organisation in the policymaking community (Outgoing Fellowship), and for policy professionals to work closely with, or embedded in, a University department or faculty (Incoming Fellowship).

Fellowships of up to £20,000 foster sustained collaboration between research and policy partners to:

- Enable researchers and policy professionals to share evidence and support its use in decision-making;
- Improve researchers' and policy professionals' understanding of how research can inform policymaking, and develop the skills to catalyse that process; and
- Broaden and deepen the networks of both partners.

This scheme is supported by the University's allocation from the Policy Support Fund. Fellowships can last up to 8.5 months, starting no earlier than 18 November 2024. All project activity **must** be completed and funding spent by 31 July 2025.

All applications must include at least one researcher from the University of Oxford and one policy professional from a policymaking organisation.

Applications for both types of Fellowship (Outgoing and Incoming) must be submitted by a researcher from a department or faculty at the University. If the researcher has a college-only contract, they must apply via a faculty or department. DPhil students can apply if they will have submitted their thesis and be awaiting examination at the point their project will commence.

Applications from those new to, or experienced in, academic-policy engagement are equally welcome. Applications involving researchers in the Humanities Division are particularly encouraged.

Applications are made using the Internal Research Award Management System (IRAMS).

Researcher applicants are encouraged to consult their departmental research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines.

All applicants are welcome to contact the Policy Engagement Team for advice on eligibility criteria, potential hosts at Oxford or in the policymaking community, and other related questions. (See below, 'Where to get support'.)

Selected case studies of current and previous Fellows can be found here.

Deadline: 12:00 BST, 14 October 2024

2. Key dates

Call opens	22 July 2024
Application deadline	**12:00 BST, 14 October 2024**
Applicants notified of funding decision	w/c 11 November 2024
Earliest project start date	18 November 2024
Estimated date of award set-up	2 December 2024
Latest project end date	31 July 2025

3. Types of Fellowship

OPEN Fellows can be incoming or outgoing. Applications for either type of Fellowship must include at least one researcher (the Research Partner) and one non-academic partner from the policymaking community (the Policy Partner).

- Incoming Fellows are policy professionals, hosted by a University department or faculty, who will benefit from working closely with researchers, both in terms of accessing relevant evidence and expertise, and improving their understanding of conducting research and analysis. This in turn will be likely to feed into their approach to policymaking, and facilitate future collaboration involving the University and their networks.
- Outgoing Fellows are researchers, working with – often embedded in – a policy organisation, who will share evidence with their policymaking partners and support its use in decision-making. Researchers will benefit from the practice, knowledge and perspectives of policy professionals, improving their understanding of policymaking and feeding this experience back into their research, to enable that to be more relevant and useful. They will also be likely to broaden and deepen their networks, and raise their profile within the policymaking community.

Both types of Fellow will be expected to spend at least 50% of their time working with their Host organisation, either on site or remotely.

4. What can a Fellowship be used for?

Proposals may relate to continuation of ongoing or earlier activity, or substantially new activities. The former must clearly demonstrate the added value of further funding and the potential for timely outcomes, which might include those that are:

- Instrumental: changes to plans, decisions, behaviours, practices, actions, policies;
- Conceptual: changes to knowledge, awareness, attitudes, emotions;
- Capacity-building: changes to skills and expertise;
- Enduring connectivity: changes to the number and quality of relationships and trust; or
- Culture/attitudes towards knowledge exchange and towards research impact itself.[1]

Proposals should not exceed £20,000 in eligible costs.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate in their proposal a measurable commitment from at least one partner organisation external to Oxford. Cash or in-kind contributions from external partners are expected to amount to at least 10% of funds requested.

The following kinds of activity are some of those that may be supported:

- Placement of a policy professional employed by an organisation that makes or informs public policy in a University of Oxford department or faculty, for example, this might be through

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[1] See Meagher, L., Edwards, D. (2020, March 2). A framework to evaluate the impacts of research on policy and practice.

learning or enhancing research skills, utilising data, literature and equipment not normally accessible to them, developing critical analysis skills; or advising on strategies for engaging with policy.;

- Placement of a University of Oxford researcher in an organisation that makes or informs public policy, for example, this might be through improving their understanding of where evidence is used in policymaking; developing the skills required to engage with policy effectively; providing innovative ideas for improving policies or their implementation; contributing to improved service delivery, capacity-building or product/service development; or by providing specific expertise for an area they are working in
- Policy or evidence seminars (to facilitate knowledge exchange and develop ideas);
- High-level stakeholder meetings;
- Policy practitioner meetings/workshops;
- Activities to facilitate the development and management of relationships between academic and non-academic users/stakeholders;
- Co-design of tools and resources that emerge from research that can maximise the use of research outputs in policy practitioner communities; and
- User-led and co-produced research, where researchers engage directly with users in jointly shaping the research agenda and in applying research to current issues relating to policy, strategy or practice.

This scheme will **not** fund:

- Research consultancy;
- Studentships or internships for UKRI-funded DPhil students, where these are funded through UKRI Doctoral Training Grants;
- Business as usual activities, e.g. academic events, including conferences and workshops, lacking clear prospects of enabling policy engagement and academic publications.

Selected case studies of current and previous Fellows can be found here.

5. How will applications be assessed?

To be eligible for assessment, proposals must explain how the Fellowship will benefit the Fellow's professional development and build capacity for academic-policy engagement within the host organisation.

The panel will score all eligible applications on a scale from 1 to 6, mindful of the following criteria:

- **Relevance to at least one public policy challenge identified as such by the policy partner(s)**, reflected in: Policy Partner's statement of support; proposed goal and outcomes

- **Potential to advance policy professionals' understanding, to clarify or expand the range of options open to them**, reflected in: Policy Partner's in statement of support; proposed goal and outcomes

- **Effectiveness of project design and methods, reflecting input of partner(s) throughout project**, reflected in: clear, logical pathway from activities, via outputs, to outcomes and goal that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound; identification of key assumptions, risks, and issues that may affect implementation

- **Effectiveness of proposed arrangements for monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and the potential for other researchers and policy professionals to learn from the proposed project**, reflected in: provision for iterative learning; opportunities to share learning; theory of change

- **Value for money**, reflected in: articulation of measurable outcomes; clear identification and justification of all costs; identification and mitigation of financial risks; quantified contribution (cash or in-kind) by Policy Partner (at least 10% of amount requested) and other partners

A PDF version of the scoring definitions and attributes can be found here.

6. How will funding be allocated?

Eligible proposals will be assigned, based on their average score, to one of three bands. The panel may moderate scores to ensure that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, paying particular attention to proposals that have received a wide range of scores and those that may be close to band boundaries.

Should there be insufficient funds to support all fundable proposals, to increase equality of opportunity and reduce the effect of unconscious bias, including as to the relative importance of different policy priorities, funds will be allocated on a random basis:

- Firstly, to applicants in Band A
- Next to those in Band B, until insufficient funding is available to satisfy the next applicant.

7. Who can apply?

Proposals must include one of each of the following:

Role	Outgoing Fellowship	Incoming Fellowship
Fellow	Research Partner: an academic or researcher at the University of Oxford with a contract of employment with a department or faculty that lasts for the duration of the award. DPhil students are eligible to serve as a Fellow if they will have submitted their thesis and be awaiting examination at the point their project will commence. The Fellow may also hold the role of PI, if eligible. Otherwise it will be necessary to invite a senior researcher to hold this role. Masters students are ineligible.	Policy Partner: a policy professional employed by policymaking organisation. They must have a contract of employment that lasts for the duration of the award.
Host	Policy Partner: a policy professional employed by an organisation with an explicitly policy-relevant mission, e.g., devolved, national or supra-national assemblies; civil services; statutory bodies with responsibilities that are sectoral (e.g., regulators), regional (e.g., local councils) or subject-matter-related; international or intergovernmental organisations; and some non-academic civil society organisations. They must have a contract of employment that lasts for the duration of the award.	Research Partner: Usually the PI, but can also be any researcher who meets the eligibility criteria for the role of PI.

Principal Investigator	An academic or researcher employed at a department or faculty at the University of Oxford. The PI must be a permanent member of staff, a researcher on an open-ended, externally funded contract, or a fixed-term researcher (FTR) with a contract of employment that lasts at least six months beyond the planned end date of the award. Those with a contract of employment that lasts less than this cannot serve as a PI but may serve as a Co-applicant. If the PI moves to another university during the course of the project, this funding will not transfer with them. Awards can only be held in departments or faculties, not in colleges. Researchers with college-only contracts must apply via a department or faculty, with a member of that department or faculty as a Co-applicant. Retired and Emeritus Fellows are ineligible.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants can include: other researchers; DPhil students; teaching staff; museum staff; research facilitators and other professional services staff; and additional external partners.

Project staff

Project staff not currently employed by the University must be able to demonstrate their eligibility to work in the United Kingdom.

For information regarding support for finding partners, please see section 12.

Many University departments and faculties have internal eligibility criteria, approval processes, and other guidelines to which all applicants should adhere.

8. What can be funded?

Eligible costs include:

- Salary costs/teaching buy-out for Outgoing Fellows
- Salary costs of project staff e.g., research assistants
- Travel and subsistence costs for researchers, external partners or delegates
- Event costs, including venue hire, AV services, transcription, and (capped at 1% of funds requested and proportionate – max £25 per person for a full day event) catering
- Consultancy/professional fees for external partners
- Equipment, capped at 5% of funds requested.

Efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the proposal. Payments will not be made for miscellaneous expenses or unspecified items.

Funding for these schemes is not provided on a full economic cost (FEC) basis. Estates and indirect costs are not covered by this funding but all direct costs required to develop, deliver and evaluate the project are covered. If you are unsure about the eligibility of a specific expense, please contact the Policy Engagement Team for guidance.

Outgoing Fellows

For researchers on permanent contracts, the award can be used to fund a period of buy-out from a current contract with a college, department or faculty (subject to agreement of all parties); or hourly-paid research assistance roughly equivalent to the value of a term's buyout. (This must be supported through the researcher's faculty/department.)

For FTRs, the award can provide salary costs for the duration of the award, either full-time or part-time.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to cover some costs at the Policy Partner's organisation, if the participation of the organisation is essential to the success of the project, but would otherwise be prohibited by cost. Please also note that VAT cannot be recovered so must be included in the budget at application stage where necessary.

9. How to apply

Researchers are encouraged to join OPEN before applying.

OPEN Fellowship applications are made using the Internal Research Award Management System (IRAMS) system only. This is a four-part process:

1. Complete the online section of the application on IRAMS
2. Download and complete the Case for Support Word template from IRAMS
3. Combine the Case for Support with the other supporting documents into a single PDF
4. Upload the single PDF to IRAMS, which should comprise:
   a. Case for Support, with all relevant fields completed
   b. Letter(s) of support from host and other external partner(s)
   c. Letter of support from the Fellow's organisation
   d. A CV for the Fellow – max. one A4 page
   e. Breakdown of costs presented as an X5 admin output.

Letter(s) of support from the host and any other external partner(s)

- A letter of support (max. one A4 page) should be provided by the host and any other partner organisation outside of the University (not the Fellow's organisation). This should:
  o Demonstrate that they understand the project and its goal(s);
  o Specify their role and commitment to the proposal;
  o Describe what they hope the project will achieve and where they see it leading;
  o Describe how the Fellowship will benefit their organisation or department/faculty; and
  o Outline the support and resources that will be provided to the Fellow to support their successful completion of the project, professional development and network-building.

A named individual from the host organisation will be required to be responsible for overseeing the project. In instances where obtaining a letter of support is particularly difficult or inappropriate at the proposal stage, applications may be submitted without one, though any award would be offered only on condition of providing one.

Letter of support from Fellow's organisation

- A letter of support (max. one A4 page) should be provided by a senior employee at the Fellow's organisation. For Outgoing Fellowships, this should be the Head of Department or Faculty. It should demonstrate their support for the project and include details of how the organisation or department/faculty will support delivery.

Costing

- The online application form in IRAMS requires a financial breakdown of the project. For each budget line please describe the costs being requested in the corresponding 'Description' field, and if appropriate, provide a justification. Once the 'Purpose' is entered for three budget lines, more budget lines will become available on the online form.
- Please provide an FEC costing. This should be presented in the form of an admin output from the University's costing and pricing software, X5. Applicants should ask their research administrator or finance officer to produce the X5 costing.
- The total requested in IRAMS should match the PRICE on the X5 costing output.

- Projects must be completed and all funds spent by 31 July 2025, so all costs must be attributed to Year 1 only. No extensions can be given after this date.

Departmental/faculty approval

- Applications are automatically submitted to the PI's department for approval via IRAMS.
- Where proposals include staff time for researchers based in a different department to the PI, a statement should be provided by all departments involved.
- Applicants should check with their department for internal approval procedures and deadlines. Some departments require significant notice to check and submit proposals, so applicants are advised to seek guidance from their departmental administrator as soon as they consider making an application.

10. Selection process

Subject to departmental approval, applications will be reviewed and the funding recommendations will be made by the panel.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application during the week beginning 11 November 2024. Results will be issued by email. Feedback will be available on request.

The Policy Engagement Team would like to use successful applications as an exemplar for future applicants. Please bear this in mind if your application is successful. All sensitive data will be removed from applications before they are shared. Successful applicants will be given an opportunity to opt-out.

11. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Applicants are encouraged to consult the Policy Engagement Team's guidance and resources relating to monitoring, evaluation and learning and are expected to outline relevant arrangements in their case for support.

All Fellows will be supported by the Policy Engagement Team throughout their Fellowship to maximise learning from their experience and share this with others. Fellows will have the opportunity to:

- Participate in a cohort-gathering event in January 2025 for Fellows and Hosts to cohort gathering
- Publish a blog about their Fellowship for the OPEN website
- Present their work at and end-of-scheme networking event in July 2025 for OPEN members
- Share their learnings with others, e.g. in the context of training activities or resources, or in the form of a blog
- Communicate progress towards outcomes, planned or unplanned, including via the team's online presence and social media.

Reporting requirements

Timely consideration of arrangement for monitoring, evaluation and learning will also facilitate and inform the reporting that is required of all award-holders. These reports will be the key mechanism to collect critical information for reporting to Research England, and will assist the Policy Engagement Team in monitoring progress and managing any issues that arise.

A schedule of reporting dates will be provided with award offer letters. PIs will be contacted with an email reminder closer to the dates that reports are due for submission. The emails will include a number of questions to help shape your reports.

- **End-of-project report** – The end-of-project report should evaluate the project, demonstrate the impact and benefits for both the researcher and the partner organisation, and detail any future plans for ongoing engagement with the partner organisation. This report should be submitted within one month of the end of the project.

- **Impact report** – The impact report should briefly outline further impacts achieved in the six months following the project's completion. The aim is to capture any impact that has developed since the project's completion date.

12. Where to get support

All applicants are welcome to contact the Policy Engagement Team (researchandpublicpolicy@admin.ox.ac.uk) to discuss ideas for a potential application, as well as for advice on eligibility criteria, potential hosts at Oxford or in the policymaking community, and other related questions. The relevant divisional lead from the table below will respond.

Divisional affiliation of Principal Investigator	Contact
Gardens, Libraries, and Museums	Will Pryor (william.pryor@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Humanities	Thomas Kelsey (thomas.kelsey@humanities.ox.ac.uk)
Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Jess Hedge (jessica.hedge@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Medical Sciences	Naomi Gibson (naomi.gibson@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
Social Sciences	Noora Kanfash (noora.kanfash@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Researcher applicants are encouraged to consult their departmental research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines.

13. Guidance and resources

- From the Policy Engagement Team:
  - Selected case studies of current and previous Fellows.
  - How can I engage with policymakers?
  - How does UK Government work and what do policymakers look for?
  - How do I engage with the UK Parliament and how do parliaments work?
  - How do I build policy engagement into project design?
  - How do I engage with policymakers internationally?
  - How do I monitor, evaluate and learn about policy engagement?
- From elsewhere:
  - ESRC Impact Toolkit
  - 'Guidance on Planning and demonstrating Effective Policy Engagement' (Arts & Humanities Research Council)
  - 'How to engage with policy makers: a guide for academics in the arts and humanities' (Institute for Government, Arts & Humanities Research Council)
  - Policy Impact: A 'how to guide' for researchers (University of Cambridge)
  - Research England's Knowledge Exchange pages
  - 'Routes to Policy Impact: A Practical Guide for Academics and Researchers' (University of Nottingham)
  - Science for Policy Handbook (Elsevier)
  - 'Engaging with local government: A Guide for Academics' (University of Cambridge)
  - Engaging with evidence toolkit (Nesta, Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement and Chief Scientific Adviser's Office at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
  - Engaging with academics: guide for policy makers (Government Office for Science)

14. Get inspired!

- [Oxford's Experience in Policy Engagement](#) – news, stories, and advice from OPEN Fellows and other policy-engaged academics at Oxford
- [Social Sciences Division impact case studies](#) – lay summaries of successful impact stories
- [ESRC IAA funded project summaries](#) – short summaries of projects funded to date
- [TORCH KE Fellowships and other projects](#) – run by the Humanities Division
- [Oxford Impacts case study series](#)
- [Oxford's KE and Impact pages](#)
- [ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize](#) - watch winners' impact videos
- [ESRC Impact case studies](#) – read case studies or watch videos
- [LSE Impact Blog](#)
- [Transforming Evidence](#) (blog)
- [Universities Policy Engagement Network](#) (blog)