Oxford Policy Engagement Network Fellowships 2023-24

Guidance for applicants

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1. Summary

Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Fellowships enable researchers and public policy professionals to work closely together on a sustained project that strengthens the contribution of academic evidence and expertise to policy communities. Fellowships are available for academic and research staff from the University of Oxford to work closely with, or in, an organisation in the policymaking community, and for policy professionals to work closely with, or embedded in, a University department or faculty.

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

- Enable researchers and policymakers to share evidence and support its use in decision-making;
- Improve researchers' and policymakers' 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 allocations from the Higher Education Innovation Fund and Policy Support Fund. Fellowships can last up to 8.5 months, starting no earlier than 13 November 2023. All project activity **must** be completed and funding spent by 31 July 2024.

Academics and researchers from any department or faculty at the University can apply. Those with college-only contracts 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.

The career stage of previous OPEN Fellows has ranged from DPhil students awaiting examination through to Associate Professors. Applications from those new to, or experienced in, policy engagement are equally welcome. Applications from those in the Humanities and Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Divisions are particularly encouraged.

Policy professionals who would like to undertake a Fellowship but who do not have a research partner, and researchers who would be interested in hosting an incoming Fellow, should [contact the Policy Engagement Team](#).

All applications must include at least one non-academic policy partner organisation.

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

Applicants should follow the guidance below, and 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. Questions regarding the scheme in general, application process, and eligibility, should be addressed to researchandpublicpolicy@admin.ox.ac.uk.

To discuss ideas for a proposal, applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant divisional contact within the Policy Engagement Team to arrange a consultation.

Division	Contact
Humanities Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Sarah Eichhorn (sarah.eichhorn@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Medical Sciences	Naomi Gibson (naomi.gibson@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
Social Sciences GLAM	Will Pryor (william.pryor@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Deadline: 12:00 BST, 9 October 2023

2. Key dates

Call opens	7 July 2023
Opportunity to meet current OPEN Fellows	13:00 BST, 20 July (See Section 4.)
Application deadline	12:00 BST, 9 October
Applicants notified of funding decision	w/c 6 November
Earliest project start date	13 November
Latest project end date	31 July 2024

3. Types of fellowship

OPEN Fellows can be outgoing or incoming:

- Outgoing Fellows are researchers, working with – often embedded in – a policy partner organisation, who will share knowledge and evidence with their policymaking partners and support its use in decision-making. For example, this might be through 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. Researchers will benefit from the practice, knowledge and perspectives of policy partners, 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.
- 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. For example, this might be through learning or using research skills, utilising data, literature and equipment not normally accessible to them, or developing critical analysis skills. This in turn will be likely to feed into their approach to policymaking, and facilitate future collaboration involving the University and their networks.

Both types of Fellow will be expected to spend at least 50% of their time working with their partner organisation.

4. What can a Fellowship be used for?

All applications must include at least one external non-academic partner in the policymaking community.

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. Cash or in-kind contributions from external partners are expected to amount to at least 10% of funds requested.

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 impact.

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

- Placement of a researcher in organisations that make or inform public policy;
- Placement of an employee of such an organisation in a University department or faculty;
- 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 with 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; or
- Academic conferences lacking clear prospects of enabling policy engagement.

Previous OPEN Fellows have worked with a wide range of partners in the policymaking community, in Oxfordshire, Westminster, Whitehall, and elsewhere in all four countries of the UK, as well as further afield: in Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe; in Central Asia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, and Israel. Selected case studies of current and previous OPEN Fellows can be found here.

A limited number of spaces are available for potential applicants (research partners) to meet the current cohort of OPEN Fellows at 13:00 BST on 20 July; those who wish to do so may express interest here.

5. How will applications be assessed?

The OPEN Steering Group aims to support high quality proposals which (a) show strong potential to accelerate and deliver impact in policy arising from excellent research and (b) demonstrate commitment to developing productive partnerships with policy partners. When assessing applications, they will also consider the following criteria:

- Relevance to one or more public policy challenge, identified as such by the policy partner(s) (10%);
- Potential to advance policymakers' understanding, clarify, or expand, the range of options open to them (30%);
- Effectiveness of project design and methods, reflecting involvement of partner(s) throughout project (35%);
- Effectiveness of proposed arrangements for monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and the potential for other researchers and policymakers to learn from the partners' experience (15%); and
- Value for money: including demonstrable investment (cash or in-kind) by external partners, where appropriate (10%).

6. Who can apply?

Applications must include one of each of the following:

- A research partner – an academic or researcher employed at a department or faculty at the University of Oxford; and
- A policy partner – someone employed by an organisation within the policymaking community e.g., law-makers at devolved, national or supra-national level; civil service policy professionals and others who support law-makers; statutory bodies with responsibilities that are sectoral (e.g., regulators), regional (e.g. local councils) or subject-matter-related; international or intergovernmental organisations; or non-academic civil society organisations with a policy-relevant mission.

One partner will serve as the outgoing or incoming Fellow. If the research partner does not meet the eligibility criteria for Principal Investigator (PI) (described below), it will be necessary to invite a senior researcher to hold this role.

Applications can only be submitted by the research partner. 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, as well as Masters students, are ineligible. 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 11.

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

Outgoing Fellow

An outgoing Fellow must have a contract of employment with a department or faculty at the University 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.

Incoming Fellow

An incoming Fellow must have a contract of employment that lasts for the duration of the award.

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.

Principal Investigator

Regardless of whether the Fellow is outgoing or incoming, the Principal Investigator (PI) must be a researcher at a department of faculty at the University, or at a college, applying via such a department or faculty. 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.

7. 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;
- Project costs including publishing, venue hire, transcription and IT;
- Consultancy/professional fees for external partners; and
- Equipment.

Efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the application. 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 your divisional contact in 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.

Incoming Fellows

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to cover some costs at the partner organisation, if the participation of the partner 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 costs where necessary. If the Fellow is incoming from an external organisation, or a partner is delivering services in aid of the project, any additional costs including VAT need to be checked and factored in to the budget at application stage.

8. 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 external partner(s)
   c. Letter of support from the Head of Department or Faculty
   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 external partner(s)

- A letter of support (max. one A4 page) should be provided by each external partner 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 project will benefit their organisation; and
  o Outline the support that will be provided to the applicant.
- A named individual from this 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 Head of Department or Faculty

- A letter of support (max. one A4 page) should be provided by the Head of Department or Faculty. It should demonstrate their support for the project and include details of how the department or 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 2024, 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 your 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.

9. Selection process

Subject to departmental approval, your application will be reviewed and the funding recommendations will be made by the OPEN Steering Group.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application during the week beginning 6 November 2023. 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.

10. 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.

The Policy Engagement Team works with OPEN Fellows, individually and as a cohort, to

- Maximise learning from their experience, and in finding ways to share that with others, e.g. in the context of training activities or resources, or in the form of a blog; and
- Communicate progress towards outcomes, planned or unplanned, including via the teams 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.

11. Where to get support

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. Applicants with questions regarding the scheme or application process, including queries relating to eligibility, should email researchandpublicpolicy@ox.ac.uk. If you'd like to discuss ideas for a potential application, please email your divisional contact in the Policy Engagement Team to book a 20-minutes consultation.

Division	Contact
Humanities Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Sarah Eichhorn (sarah.eichhorn@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Medical Sciences	Naomi Gibson (naomi.gibson@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
Social Sciences GLAM	Will Pryor (william.pryor@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

12. Guidance and resources
    - From the Policy Engagement Team:
        o How can I engage with policymakers?
        o How does UK Government work and what do policymakers look for?
        o How do I engage with the UK Parliament and how do parliaments work?
        o How do I build policy engagement into project design?
        o How do I engage with policymakers internationally?
        o How do I monitor, evaluate and learn about policy engagement?
    - From elsewhere:
        o ESRC Guidance for Collaboration
        o ESRC Impact Toolkit
        o 'Guidance on Planning and demonstrating Effective Policy Engagement' (Arts & Humanities Research Council)
        o 'How to engage with policy makers: a guide for academics in the arts and humanities' (Institute for Government, Arts & Humanities Research Council)
        o Policy Impact: A 'how to guide' for researchers (University of Cambridge)
        o Rebuilding a Resilient Britain: outputs from a programme in July 2020, convening researchers, funders and policymakers to identify evidence and uncover research gaps around cross-cutting Areas of Research Interest (Government Office for Science)
        o Research England's Knowledge exchange pages
        o 'Routes to Policy Impact: A Practical Guide for Academics and Researchers' (University of Nottingham)
        o Science for Policy Handbook (Elsevier)
        o 'Engaging with local government: A Guide for Academics' (University of Cambridge)

13. 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)