

International Interdisciplinary Research Projects 2026

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Last review date	May 2025
Next review date	March 2027

Please read the scheme notes carefully. Incorrectly submitted applications will not be considered.

1 Summary

- 1.1 The British Academy is inviting proposals led by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences working with international partners, and wishing to develop genuinely interdisciplinary projects that range across all SHAPE and STEM disciplines on the theme of transnational and planetary challenges.
- 1.2 The Academy is able to offer awards of up to £300,000 for 24 months in duration (with Full Economic Costing at 80%).
- 1.3 This round of the programme is supported by the UK's Department for Science, Innovation & Technology.
- 1.4 **Applications must be submitted by 17 September 2025, 17.00 (UK time).**

Applications should be submitted well in advance of the deadline. We recommend at least five days prior to allow for institutional approval

2 Programme Aims

- 2.1 The purpose of each project will be to develop new international research led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences, to further understanding of transnational and planetary challenges. Genuinely productive and integral interdisciplinarity is a requirement, with the expectation that this will involve collaboration across disciplines. The collaboration can include any SHAPE or STEM discipline as long as the research is led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences. Applications that do not meet this requirement will be considered ineligible and will not be taken forward through the assessment process. The Academy particularly encourages applications led from the humanities.
- 2.2 The Academy will only accept applications that focus on one or more of the following four transnational and planetary challenge domains. Applications should engage with both the important technical and/or scientific components of each domain, and also with those aspects which make the challenge difficult for a single sovereign states to manage individually. To do so, applications must address how non-state actors and transnational organisations might contribute to the selected challenge.
- **Earth system governance**, including problems related to climate change, biodiversity loss, oceanic degradation, and other forms of environmental pollution
 - **Digital and other transformative technologies**, including the challenges presented by artificial intelligence (AI), cyber, synthetic biology, nanotech, and other breakthroughs
 - **Global health**, particularly the rising threat posed by pandemic disease and the linkages among human, animal, and environmental health (“One Health”)
 - **Outer space governance**, encompassing the dilemmas posed by accumulating orbital debris, space traffic congestion, property and sovereignty claims, and arms racing.
- 2.3 The Academy envisages the awards made through the Programme will:
- Advance deeper, more nuanced, and historically aware thinking about the relevant challenge;
 - Identify how humanities and social sciences research working in an interdisciplinary fashion can contribute to international and national knowledge exchange, practice, and policy development in this area, and what lessons can be learnt to navigate any future landscape(s);

- Develop ways of communicating and collaborating in cross-disciplinary and multilingual working through appropriate international partnerships.

3 Scope of the Call

- 3.1 Applications must meet the Programme Aims set out above, demonstrating a genuinely interdisciplinary approach through international research collaboration. The Academy wishes to encourage novel thinking rather than offering a pre-designed idea of the form of the research.
- 3.2 The Academy also does not have any pre-determined ideas regarding the exact type of project, outputs, and dissemination of the research. Instead, the onus is on the applicants to convince the Academy that their projects bring genuine added value to addressing the Programme Aims and Scope of the Call and bring valuable interdisciplinary insights and perspectives of relevance to the question of transnational and planetary challenges.
- 3.3 In applying to any one or more than one of the above four transnational and planetary challenge domains, the Academy is seeking applications that focus on the role that groups of actors have, have had and will or could have in responding to or contributing to (positively or negatively) change or inertia in tackling these transnational and planetary challenges. This can be within one of these domains or across one or more of them.
- 3.4 For the purpose of this call, groups of actors are understood as including an entire spectrum of relevant non-state actors, among them private corporations, civil society organisations, philanthropies, subnational political authorities such as cities, and transnational action networks, including but not restricted to networks of sovereign state governments and international organisations. All applications must demonstrate explicitly how they are engaging with and incorporating non-state actors into their project design.
- 3.5 The Academy is keen to encourage applications that consider how these challenges have been and are conceived, experienced and represented across different regions, communities, and types of actors.
- 3.6 Applications should clearly indicate how they wish to focus on the role of groups of actors as outlined above in one or more of the transnational and planetary challenge domains set out in the Programme Aims. The Academy wishes to encourage novel thinking rather than offering a pre-designed idea of the form of the research. Some possible framing questions are given below (Paragraphs 3.7-3.9) to indicate the range of possible avenues for applications. These should not be seen as prescriptive.

- 3.7 Dynamics:** What have been, are and will be the main driving forces behind the dynamics within and between these domains? How do shifting dynamics between private and public authorities affect the nature of transnational and planetary challenges—and the ability to respond to them? How do perceptions of transnational and planetary challenges vary across regions, actors, and stakeholders?
- 3.8 Experience & Knowledge:** How have these challenges been experienced, responded to and imagined across different polities, societies and communities? Who has what responsibilities to tackle and respond to transnational and planetary challenges in or across these domains? What lessons can be learnt from past experiences in experiencing and responding to such challenges? What are the roles of different types of knowledge in tackling the challenges within and across these domains?
- 3.9 Future Possibilities:** Is it possible to imagine a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable approach to the governance of planetary and transnational challenges, than is currently the case, within one or across more than one domain? Over the next 10-20 years, what practical steps might be taken to overcome existing differences and help put humanity on a better path? What would be the implications and scenarios were cooperation to fail?
- 3.10** The remit of the programme does not include primarily practice-based outputs such as musical composition and performance, visual practice, creative writing and film-making. These areas of research will be considered to fall within the Academy's remit only when they form part of an integrated project of demonstrable critical or historical significance.

4 Equitable partnerships

- 4.1 It is expected that this application and the research it would undertake will be underpinned by partnerships between researchers, institutions and with wider stakeholders. Equity is key to ensuring that these partnerships are effective. Applicants are required to justify the equity within their proposed partnerships. Any applications that are deemed to not support equitable partnerships will not be funded.
- 4.2 Applicants will be required to detail how their project will ensure equitable partnerships, including how it will take note that partnerships should: be transparent and based on mutual respect; should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits; should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes; and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society.
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5 Duration and Start of Award

- 5.1 Projects must be 24 months in duration and are expected to commence between March/April 2026.
- 5.2 The call is expected to be able to support approximately 8-10 awards.
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6 Value of Funding

- 6.1 The total funding available per award in this call is up to £300,000 over 2 years. Within that limit of £300,000 over 2 years the award is offered at 80% FEC (i.e. the total contribution requested from the Academy may not exceed £300,000 and the total project value at 100% FEC may not exceed £375,000). **Applicants should put the 80% FEC figure into the application form.**
- 6.2 80% FEC is understood in the following manner:

Cost Category	FEC contribution
Directly Incurred staff costs e.g. relevant team salary and oncosts.	80%
Other Directly Incurred costs e.g., consumables, travel.	100%
Directly Allocated (e.g. PI salary and estates costs) and Indirect Costs.	80%

- 6.3 The only exception to this understanding and 80% FEC in general is the costing of international Co-Applicants or partners in non-academic settings (in the UK or internationally) who demonstrably do not use and would not use FEC modelling. For such partners the costing regime used should be at 100% for direct costs and a flat rate of 25% of the direct project costs to be allocated for indirect costs. UK-based institutions that would be expected to use FEC may not use this costing regime. It is only for institutions as described above. **Institutions costed using this regime must be costed separately in the application budget table and clearly explained in the 'Justification' field.**
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7 Applicant and Award Flexibility

- 7.1 The British Academy has set aside [specific funding to support any additional needs](#) that applicants and award holders may have. This funding is available both to applicants, to assist in making an application to British Academy schemes, and award holders. Funding is managed outside of the Knowledge Frontiers: International Interdisciplinary Research Projects 2026 application process.
- 7.2 These awards are intended to be highly flexible. The following guidelines will normally apply. However, in exceptional circumstances, additional flexibility may be available. Please contact internationalchallenges@thebritishacademy.ac.uk for further information
- **Career background and history** – The Academy is aware that individuals will have had different opportunities to balance their research with other commitments during their career or may come from diverse or non-traditional career backgrounds. For example, having taken extended leave including parental or medical leave, or having returned to research following time in other roles or having had periods of significant teaching or administrative workload that may have impacted on the applicants' research. There is a question in the application form (the personal statement) that will enable applicants to provide further information so that the Academy can take this into account when assessing applicants' track record.

- **Reasonable adjustments** – Applications from researchers with disabilities are welcome and encouraged. The Academy will provide adjustments to ensure they can participate fully in the selection process. If an adjustment is required when accessing the application form or for any other part of the application process then please contact internationalchallenges@thebritishacademy.ac.uk. In addition, costs that are required for the researcher to undertake their award will be considered eligible regardless to what is set out in Section 8 below. The Academy welcomes any questions applicants may have on this matter. The costs of reasonable adjustments required to support researchers with disabilities will also be an eligible cost throughout the duration of the award.
- **Maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, adoptive or extended sick leave** - There is provision for maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, adoptive or extended sick leave for the Principal Investigator funded through the grant as defined in the UK host organisation's standard organisational policy. An extension will be added to account for any time lost within the original period of the award and an additional amount of time will be added on top for up to 6 months.
- **Childcare arrangements** - Provision for the cost of childcare support will be considered as part of the allowable research expenses during the award for the Principal Investigator funded through the grant when undertaking activity related to the grant, such as travel to conferences. This includes instances where the award holder wishes to support their child(ren) themselves, such as travelling with them whilst undertaking their research.
- **Portability of awards** – If the Principal Investigator moves UK host organisation before the start or during the award, the award will be moved to the new UK host organisation (provided that the new host organisation is in the UK and meets the host organisation eligibility criteria as specified below).
- **Time on grant** – The award holder can spend a minimum of 20% of their time and a maximum of 100% of their time on the grant. The time spent on the grant can change over the course of the award but may not be under 20% across the duration of the award. The duration of the award will not be extended if the award holder does spend less than 100% of their time on the grant. Staff employed on the award may be employed full or part time regardless of the time the award holder spends on the award.
- **Field research** – As appropriate, the award holder will be able to undertake as much field research, in the UK and/or internationally, as necessary for the conduct of their award.

- **UK host organisation** – The award holder must be contracted for at least 50% of their time at their UK host organisation, however, beyond that they can hold other appointments, including internationally, with joint international appointments being eligible.

8 Eligibility

8.1 **Applicants** must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Each project will be led by a named Principal Investigator (PI). The PI must be a researcher in a discipline within the social sciences or the humanities. The PI is expected to direct the research and the management of the project and has responsibility for the overall project reporting requirements.
- The PI must be of postdoctoral or above status (or have equivalent research experience).
- The PI must hold an established role in an eligible UK university or research institute. The PI's position must last at least the duration of the grant funded by the Academy.
- The PI can spend a minimum of 20% of their time and a maximum of 100% of their time on the grant. The time spent on the grant can change over the course of the award but may not be under 20% across the duration of the award. Staff employed on the award may be employed full or part time regardless of the time the award holder spends on the award.
- PIs may not hold more than one British Academy award of a comparable nature at any one time.
- An individual cannot be the PI on more than one bid under the British Academy's *International Interdisciplinary Research Projects* programme.
- Applicants can be of any nationality.
- Awards are available to individuals, to be held in an institutional context.
- Awards will not be made retrospectively: this means that the work for which support is requested **must not** have commenced before the award is announced. Applications must be for new research ideas that are coherent on their own and are cutting-edge.

Applications under this call will not be accepted if the applicant or any collaborators have any outstanding reports or statements of expenditure which are still to be submitted to the Academy following previous awards.

Duplicate applications to more than one British Academy funding programme will not be accepted.

- 8.2 It is required that the PI be from the humanities or social sciences, and that amongst the PI and Co-Applicant(s) there is collaboration across disciplines. The collaboration can include any SHAPE or STEM disciplines as long as the research is led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences. Genuinely productive and integral interdisciplinarity is a requirement. Applications that do not meet this requirement will be considered ineligible and will not be taken forward through the assessment process.
- 8.3 **Co-applicants** must meet the following eligibility criteria:
- **Must include at least one researcher who is based internationally.**
 - Must be of postdoctoral or above status (or have equivalent research experience).
 - Can include other researchers based in the UK or internationally at all career stages.
 - No individual may be a Co-Applicant on more than two projects under this call (nor may a PI be additionally a Co-Applicant on more than one other project).
- 8.4 **Other Participants:** Projects may also include any number of specified 'Other Participants', who may, for example, be relevant stakeholders participating in networking or dissemination events, academic or policy advisers, practitioners, industry representatives, etc.
- 8.5 **Research assistance** is an eligible cost under this programme, and it can be supported where a reasonable case is made in line with the type of work that is required to be undertaken. PhD studentships, however, are not an eligible cost.
- 8.6 **Disciplines:** Applicants are reminded that the purpose of each project will be to develop new international research led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences, to further understanding of transnational and planetary challenges. Genuinely productive and integral interdisciplinarity is a requirement, with the expectation that this will involve collaboration across disciplines. The collaboration can include any SHAPE or STEM discipline as long as the research is led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences. Applications that do not meet this requirement will be considered ineligible and will not be taken forward through the assessment process. The Academy particularly encourages applications led from the humanities.
- 8.7 **Institutions:** The award must be held at a UK-based institution recognised by the Academy. The following types of organisations will be eligible to apply to host the Fellowship:

- Higher Education Institutes that received funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies.
- Research institutes (RIs), for which research councils have established a long-term involvement as major funder as part of the national research base.
- Approved relevant Independent Research Organisations.
- Public Sector Research Organisations.

8.8 All grants will be paid to the employing institution of the PI, and not to the individual researchers involved. Institutions must be officially **approved as eligible by the British Academy no later than 2 weeks before the deadline of this call.**

8.9 The UK host organisation is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for the management of research staff set out in the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers \(2019\)](#) and subsequent amendments. Research staff should be appointed on terms that are no less favourable than those of comparable posts in the host organisation.

9 Eligible Costs

9.1 Eligible costs are:

- the time of the PI and Co-Applicants
- research assistance
- training and development for the PI and Co-Applicants
- travel, fieldwork and related expenses
- networking costs
- university costs in hosting and supporting the project, with award holders expected to base the division of spend on the Full Economic Costing basis at 80%

9.2 Ineligible costs include:

- Purchasing of assets
- PhD studentships
- computer hardware including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras, etc.
- books and other permanent resources
- the preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, nor any other editorial task
- subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)
- costs of publication in electronic media
- travel and maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours or to write up the results of research

10 Research Methodology

- 10.1 Successful projects will be likely to employ a variety of research methods, and to include a collaborative group of researchers across relevant disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, aiming to develop ways of communicating and collaborating in cross-disciplinary and multilingual working, in partnership with colleagues internationally. In all cases, it is for the applicants to demonstrate the feasibility and relevance of their proposed research methodology. Applicants should also demonstrate the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of their proposed programme of research.
- 10.2 All proposals must include relevant plans for the appropriate communication and dissemination of findings.
- 10.3 The UK host organisation is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for public engagement with research set out in the [Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research \(2010\)](#) and subsequent amendments.

11 Gender Equality

- 11.1 Research and innovation (R&I) activities funded by the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), provided through Partner Organisations, comply with the requirements of the [DSIT R&I Gender Equality Policy](#), which states that activities must tackle instances of underrepresentation, differential needs and systemic disadvantage to improve the relevance of R&I findings that support the inclusion, reduce the impact of bias, and ultimately, contribute to reducing inequalities among genders. This includes but is not limited to Official Development Assistance activities, in line with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014.

All applications are strongly recommended to thoroughly review the above publication before designing and drafting their application.

- 11.2 All applicants must submit as part of their application a gender equality statement, which must meet compliance standards as set out in the above publication. All applications will be reviewed at the eligibility and assessment stages to ensure they meet the necessary requirements. Not meeting the necessary requirements will mean that applications are automatically not fundable.
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12 Trusted Research

- 12.1 International research collaborations are fundamental to the equity, quality, diversity and impact of UK-based researchers and institutions. Most international collaborations will benefit all those involved, however, there will be cases where there are risks.
- 12.2 Research funded through this programme needs to take account of security-related considerations. [UKRI](#), [Universities UK](#) and the [National Protective Security Authority](#) amongst others have published relevant guidance in this area. It is important to ensure that the research funded through this programme has undertaken relevant assurance related to reputational, data, financial, ethical and security risks.
- 12.3 The application should detail any research security risks that the project may encounter and how these will be mitigated. It should be noted that such risks could include the potential dual application of the research, the management of information, data and other knowledge sharing, and activities that could utilise the research to target people in other countries such as through internal surveillance and repression.
- 12.4 There is also the [Research Collaboration Advice Team](#), which is a collaboration between the UK Government and academia, that can provide advice to institutions on national security risks to international research.
- 12.5 Applicants should be aware that government guidance and UK legislation may change, and they will need to take account of any such changes that may affect their proposed research.
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13 Research Ethics

- 13.1 Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard. They must confirm that any potential ethical issues have been considered and explain how these will be addressed. The Academy requires all research it funds to be conducted in an ethical manner, with due consideration given to ethical questions arising, including safeguarding and equitable partnerships.

- 13.2 The UK host institution is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues relating to the research project are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body.
 - 13.3 Ethical approval to undertake the research must be granted by the relevant authority before any work requiring approval begins. Wherever necessary, appropriate consent should be obtained from or on behalf of participants or others affected by the research.
 - 13.4 Applicants will be asked to indicate whether their proposed research raises any special ethical issues, and whether their application has been approved by the host institution's Research Ethics Committee or other relevant authority.
 - 13.5 The UK host organisation should meet the requirements of the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (2019) and subsequent amendments and must have in place formal procedures for governing good research practice and for handling and reporting allegations of fraud or research misconduct.
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14 Risk Management

- 14.1 Researchers funded under this programme may choose to undertake fieldwork in the course of the research project. We expect an assessment with appropriate mitigation suggested of any risks entailed within the research project to be outlined within the proposal (for example, risks associated with the delivery of the research, financial management and oversight/governance).
 - 14.2 Research groups will be required to indicate if (and where) they intend to undertake research in the field. For countries/regions considered by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as a host nation of medium or high risk, the application will also require researchers to demonstrate that the PI (and the PI's host institution) understands the risk management implications and can monitor and manage the risks effectively. This should include, but need not be limited to, any risks that researchers will encounter in an area of civil unrest, violence and/or crime. This aspect will be explicitly covered in the approval of any application by the appropriate authorities at the PI's host institution, to confirm that the duty of care responsibility rests with the host institution.
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15 Selection Criteria

- 15.1 All eligible proposals submitted in response to this call will be assessed by relevant British Academy peer reviewers and then considered by a final selection panel.
- 15.2 Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:
- The quality, significance and originality of the proposal, in particular its ability to break new international research ground; and the appropriateness and robustness of the methodology.
 - Evidence of how a genuinely interdisciplinary approach led by and grounded in the humanities and/or social sciences will generate new insights into the topic of study and address the overarching aims of the call.
 - The feasibility of the proposal from a project management perspective, including appropriate timing and plan of action, as well as the feasibility of planned outputs and dissemination activity for relevant audiences.
 - Value for money.
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16 Application and Assessment Procedure

- 16.1 All applicants must register in the British Academy's online [Flexi-Grant](#) system to enable the processing and assessment of their application. All applications must be submitted in English.
- 16.2 All applications will be subject to an eligibility check undertaken by appropriate British Academy staff before being put forward for assessment, and **applications that are not completed correctly and on time will not be considered.**
- 16.3 The deadline for submissions and UK institutional approval is 17th September 2025 **at 17.00 (UK time). Applicants will not be allowed to make any changes to their applications or submit any additional information after the 17th September deadline.**

17 Code of Practice

- 17.1 The British Academy has a [Code of Practice](#) for assessing applications, setting out the principles of equity, integrity and confidentiality governing the treatment of all applications for research support. The Code of Practice also covers Data Protection, the Academy's ethics policy and the appeals procedure.
- 17.2 Feedback is not a feature of this programme, and the Academy is, regretfully, unable to enter into correspondence regarding the decisions of the awarding committee, which are governed by the Code of Practice. Please note that by applying to this programme, applicants undertake to accept the terms under which applications are assessed.
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18 Contact Details and Further Information

- 18.1 Please contact internationalchallenges@thebritishacademy.ac.uk for further information.