Talent Development Awards Scheme Guidance 2025-26

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Last review date	July 2025
Next review date	July 2027

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

1 Introduction

1.1 The British Academy has been funded by the UK government, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to continue its support for the Talent Development Awards scheme.

1.2 The aim of the scheme is to enable researchers to build their skills and capacities in core areas to develop their current and future research. This includes core areas like quantitative skills, data science, digital humanities and languages. This scheme promotes the acquisition and advancement of skills in relevant areas, supporting innovative research methods, be that through skills development, collaboration or dissemination.

1.3 It is also designed for researchers who wish to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to their work and seek to advance their skills in a new area that may fall outside the traditional bounds of their subject discipline. It provides Early Career Researchers with the opportunity to develop specialist skills to support the foundations of their career. Additionally, the scheme offers Mid and Senior Career researchers the chance to diversify their skills and methodological approaches in response to new avenues of research interest. The scheme encourages researchers to champion their newly acquired skills within their wider community, contributing to the ongoing development of skills for future generations.

1.4 The overarching aims of the scheme are to invest in UK talent and skills, and as a result, to contribute to the development and delivery of high quality regional, national and international research by:

- raising the quality of advanced quantitative skills and/or data science skills used in research, including digital methods;
- creating new opportunities for knowledge and skills to exchange across disciplines and sectors; and
- promoting language learning and the transferable skills that language learning provides.

1.5 The scheme is intended for established researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences with a current long-term appointment at a UK-based Higher Education Institution (HEI) or Independent Research Organisation (IRO) who wish to explore new opportunities for skills development and knowledge translation. It is also intended for researchers who wish to pilot new methods that speak to the aims of the scheme. The awards will be particularly valuable for researchers wishing to expand the scope of their research with the intention of applying for larger grants in the long term. It also provides the opportunity to develop new partnerships, locally, nationally, or internationally.

1.6 Applicants are encouraged to be creative in their thinking about how these awards can help them develop skills and new methods that would advance their research. The awards can be used to support collaborative, partnership working. This scheme is designed to support the career development and skillset of award-holders, and, by extension, to benefit wider groups within and beyond academia through the dissemination of methods and expertise.

1.7 Applicants are asked to submit a development proposal which should outline the ways in which the applicant intends to develop their own skills or capacities, as well as how they propose to share these skills to wider groups within, and beyond, academia.

2 Types of Activities Eligible for Support

2.1 It is expected that the main activities proposed for the award should be to facilitate the skills development of the applicant and Co-applicants(s) where applicable. The awarding panel must be able to clearly identify how the proposed activities will enable the applicant to develop new skills or capacities, as opposed to honing pre-existing competencies.

2.2 The British Academy welcomes applications requesting support for a wide range of activities that demonstrate innovation either in the use, acquisition and teaching of: languages, digital humanities, interdisciplinarity, data science skills, and quantitative skills. The following list gives examples of potential kinds of activities, but support is not limited to these:

- Funding for the Lead Applicant and Co-applicant(s) to acquire new skills or training from specialists, such as, in advanced quantitative methods, data science or skills relating to language learning, with a view to applying them in research or teaching those skills to others.
- Funding to allow visiting specialists to deliver bespoke teaching in advanced quantitative methods, data science or skills relating to language learning.
- Support for conferences, workshops and other activities that promote collaboration or cross-disciplinary learning in the use of advanced quantitative methods, data science or digital humanities.

- Support for the development of innovative teaching courses and/or online resources and hubs in advanced quantitative skills, data science, and in languages.
- Support for developing individual expertise and teaching the skills associated with the use of languages in research – for example in working with interpreters and translators.
- Funding for piloting the novel use of advanced quantitative methods or data science in research projects.

2.3 For further information, please see examples of previous Talent Development Awards on our website.

2.4 **N.B.** The Talent Development Awards are not intended to fund regular research projects and applicants must clearly demonstrate their commitment to fulfilling the aims of the scheme in their applications. Researchers seeking funding to use methods or skills they already possess are **not eligible** to apply for this scheme.

3 Subjects Covered

3.1 The British Academy welcomes proposals for high-quality research in all its subject areas, i.e. disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences. While all proposals should be situated in an appropriate field of study, they may vary considerably in their approach to conceptualisation, methodology and/or outputs, depending on the discipline. In some cases, creative and professional practice may play a significant role in shaping the methods and/or outcomes of research. In all proposals, whether practice-led or not, a clear scholarly rationale is required for the choice of research methods, processes and outputs.

4 Value and Use of Funding

4.1 The maximum grant is £10,000. Awards are to enable engagement activities to take place and are not intended as time buy-out for the award-holder. This scheme is not offered on a Full Economic Costing (FEC) basis, and 100% of the awarded funds must be used solely for the purposes outlined in the application and agreed in the award letter.

4.2 Use of Funding:

Funding can be used for a variety of purposes in support of the above activities, such as:

- Meeting the costs of travel and maintenance away from home for the Lead Applicant and Co-applicant(s);
- Employing teaching and research assistants;

- Covering the costs involved in hosting workshops or conferences;
- Meeting the costs of developing digital teaching tools and courses;
- Meeting travel and accommodation costs of visiting teachers and speakers;
- Covering short-term consultancy or salary costs of expert staff;
- Covering the costs of interpreters in the field;
- Covering incidental translation expenses;
- Covering tuition fees for accredited short courses that enable applicants to acquire specialised skills;
- Covering costs associated with specialist software (excluding commonly available office packages) and consumables (i.e. purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms, etc., and any other minor items that will be used up during the course of the project);
- Covering costs associated with online dissemination of information, including the development of podcasts, audio and/or visual recording of events, costs associated with the analysis of feedback from participants and the preparation of suitable reports on activities;
- Conference attendance (where sufficiently justified in contributing to the aims of the development proposal).

5 British Academy Additional Needs Funding

5.1 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 Talent Development Awards application process. Further information can be found on the British Academy website.

6 Responsibilities of Award-holders

6.1 Award-holders will be expected to play a role in promoting the skills and methods that are the focus of their award, and to act as champions for these skills within their institutions, through broader British Academy networks and more generally. This can involve, for example:

- Written blog pieces about their work;
- Applying their experiences in their teaching;
- Engaging with researchers or learners outside their disciplinary area.

6.2 Commitment to promoting these skills and methods forms part of the assessment criteria.

6.3 Reporting

Award-holders are required to complete two reports:

- A final report within which three months of award's end, detailing the progress of the activities in which they participated;
- A post-award report three years after the award's end, showing the impact of award on quality of their research and/or teaching.

7 Number of Awards and Strength of Competition

7.1 It is expected that approximately 26 awards (dependent upon the amount of funding required for each of the successful awards) will be made. This is the fifth round of the scheme, and the strength of competition remains difficult to estimate. We are unable to give guidance on the likely success rate.

8 Duration and Start of Award

8.1 Awards can be held for a minimum period of 6 months and up to a maximum period of 12 months. Awards are expected to commence no earlier than 1 March 2026 and no later than 31 March 2026.

9 Timetable of 2025-26 Competition

Competition Opens: 16 July 2025
Application Deadline: 8 October 2025
Decisions (notification via email): January 2026
Starting Period of Award: No earlier than 1 March 2026 and no later than 31 March 2026
Duration of Award: A minimum period of 6 months and up to a maximum period of 12 months

10 Participants

10.1 Lead Applicant:

All applications must have one Lead Applicant, although applications on behalf of more than one person are welcome. The Lead Applicant is responsible for notifying all other named individuals. These may include up to two Co-applicants, and Other Participants.

10.2 Co-Applicant(s)

Up to a maximum of two Co-applicants is permissible. The Co-applicant(s) will be directly involved in the delivery of the activity that is proposed by the Lead Applicant.

10.3 Other Participants

Lead Applicants may specify other participants who do not equate to being a Co-applicant. Other participants will be engaged in the activity proposed by the Lead Applicant but will not be directly involved with the organisation of the activity.

11 Eligibility

11.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible Lead Applicants must:

- Be ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom;
- Be holding a current long-term appointment at a UK-based Higher Education Institution (HEI) or Independent Research Organisation (IRO), which will continue for the full duration of the proposed award;
- Be intending to pursue original, independent research within the Humanities or Social Sciences;
- There are no quotas for individual subject areas and no thematic priorities within the scheme.

11.2 Lead Applicants who do not have a doctorate may have equivalent experience, which they should define in the personal statement section.

11.3 Lead Applicants who do not have a doctorate may have equivalent experience, which they should define in the personal statement section.

11.4 Co-applicants may be based in the UK or overseas. They may have a doctorate or equivalent experience, or other specialist knowledge as appropriate to the aims of the scheme.

11.5 **N.B.** Postgraduate students are **not eligible** to apply for grant support from the Academy. Lead Applicants and Co-applicants must confirm that they:

- Are not currently working towards a PhD
- Are not awaiting the outcome of a *viva voce* examination
- Are not awaiting the acceptance of any corrections required by the examiners.

11.6 Please note that applications from independent researchers without an institutional affiliation are not eligible to apply for this scheme.

11.7 Applications that are incomplete, submitted late, or missing required documentation (including reference) will not be considered.

11.8 Employing Organisation Eligibility

Lead Applicants must be based in an institution which is listed as an approving-organisation in the British Academy's grant management system, Flexi-Grant. This institution (e.g. a Higher Education Institution [HEI] or Independent Research Organisation [IRO]) must be based in the United Kingdom and will be issued the Terms and Conditions of Award, if successful.

12 Nominated Referee

12.1 Nominated Referee Requirements and Guidelines

- A reference must be provided by one nominated referee. The referee must be nominated by the Lead Applicant. The nominated referee **must not** be based at the same employing institution as the Lead Applicant or Co-applicant(s), if any. The primary consideration is that they are able to comment independently and authoritatively on your application (i.e. someone in your field, who is independent from you, the Lead Applicant, and the Co-applicant(s)). You do not need to know them personally, but you should make sure they are able to provide a reference before adding them to your application. The nominated referee is expected to comment on the potential of the Lead Applicant to benefit from this scheme and the value that this award will bring to their current and future research direction and ambition. Your nominated referee will be asked to comment upon this in a series of short statements.
- Nominated references from the Lead Applicant's former/current supervisor (including PhD supervisor) will not be accepted. The referee must not be a member of the British Academy's Council.
- The reference may be obtained from a person based within or outside the UK but must be submitted in English. If a reference is not

submitted in English, it will not be accepted and may render the application ineligible.

- Before listing your referee on your application form, you should seek permission from them that they are happy to provide this by the deadline. It is essential that you enter the correct email address for your referee, otherwise they will not receive the automated messages delivered from the British Academy Flexi-Grant® GMS. We strongly advise that you complete your application as early as possible to allow your referee enough time to provide their reference in the system. **The reference must be submitted before the application can be approved.** Any application without the supporting reference will not be able to be submitted.
- **Please note that the reference must be provided through the GMS, they cannot be provided as an email attachment nor sent by post in hard copy. Any reference received after the deadline, or outside of the system, or by another academic at the same institution as you or your Co-applicant(s) will not be accepted, and your application will be withdrawn from this competition.**

13 Inviting Participants to Contribute to Applications

13.1 Your nominated referee must be invited to contribute to your application via the Flexi-Grant system. Please see further guidance below:

- The contributors will need to register for an account on the British Academy's Flexi-Grant® Grant Management System (GMS), or have an account on Flexi-Grant, prior to being invited to contribute to the application.
- They can be invited through the 'Contributors' tab displayed on the application form summary page. Once they have been invited, they will receive an email notification with instructions on how to contribute.
- You can monitor the progress of your contributors' activity through this section of the application form, and issue reminders as required. Once the recipient has accepted your invitation, their status will be displayed as 'active'. Upon completion of their section of the application form, their status will be displayed as 'complete'.
- Once contributors have completed all their sections of the application form, please remind them to select 'Save & Submit' on the application form page or select 'Submit your contribution' on the summary page.
- **You will not be able to submit your application form until the status of all participants shows as 'complete' in the 'Contributors' tab.**

Please also note that an application cannot be submitted until all required contributors have submitted their contribution first. We recommend your nominated referee and supporting participants fulfil their requirements **at least five working days before the submission deadline** to ensure there is sufficient time for organisational approval. The employing institution approver must approve the completed application by the submission deadline.

14 The Selection Process

14.1 Assessment

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- The quality and interest of the activity or range of activities proposed
- The suitability of the activity or range of activities in relation to the aims of the scheme, eg. the skills or methods that are being developed
- The promotion of the skills and methods that are the focus of the award, and the plans for the Lead Applicant to act as champion for these skills within their institutions, through broader British Academy networks and more generally. This might include, for example, writing blog pieces about their work, applying their experiences in their teaching, and engaging with researchers or learners outside their disciplinary area.
- The feasibility and specificity of the programme of activity, and intended outcomes
- The ability of the applicant to undertake the proposed activity
- How the applicant will benefit from the scheme and the value it will bring to their current and future research direction and ambition
- Plans for the continued promotion of the skills/methods being developed – the legacy of the development proposal

14.2 **N.B.** Comparative judgements about value for money may be considered at the final stage of assessment. Any special case made for endangered or emerging fields may be taken into account at the final stage of assessment.

14.3 There are no interviews prior to selection. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in January 2026 for start between 1 – 31 March 2026. The approving organisation will be asked to give its consent before the award is confirmed.

15 Code of Practice

15.1 The Academy has a Code of Practice for assessing research 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.

16 Feedback

16.1 Feedback is not a feature of the Talent Development Awards scheme, and the Academy is, regretfully, unable to enter correspondence regarding the decisions of the Final Awarding Panel, which is governed by the Code of Practice. Please note that by applying in this scheme, applicants undertake to accept the terms under which applications are assessed.

17 Applications to Multiple British Academy Schemes

17.1 There must be no duplication of funding for the same purpose. Applicants may not hold more than one British Academy award of a comparable nature at any one time. For example, it would not be possible to hold two British Academy grant awards at the same time; but it may be possible to hold a British Academy grant (i.e. Talent Development Award or BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant) and a British Academy Fellowship at the same time, depending on the amount of time required for the Fellowship.

17.2 Please note that an application cannot be accepted if there is a report outstanding on any previous research grant awarded by the Academy to the Lead Applicant or Co-applicant(s) named in the current proposal. Failure to follow this guidance will result in your application being withdrawn from this round of competition. Duplicate applications for the same purpose to more than one Academy scheme will not be accepted.

18 Submission of Application

18.1 Once you have submitted your application for approval by your employing organisation, automatic emails will be sent to your employing organisation approver asking them to log on to the system. You will not be able to edit your application after it has been submitted to your employing organisation for approval. The employing organisation approver will either: approve and submit your application, 'send back' your application and contact you to request modifications or decline your application and contact you.

18.2 Please be aware that it is your responsibility to ensure that you complete your application in time for your employing organisation to process it (including requesting changes) and provide their approval by the closing date. It is recommended that you allow at least five working days for this process, but please check with your proposed employing organisation as their internal timetables may require earlier submission.

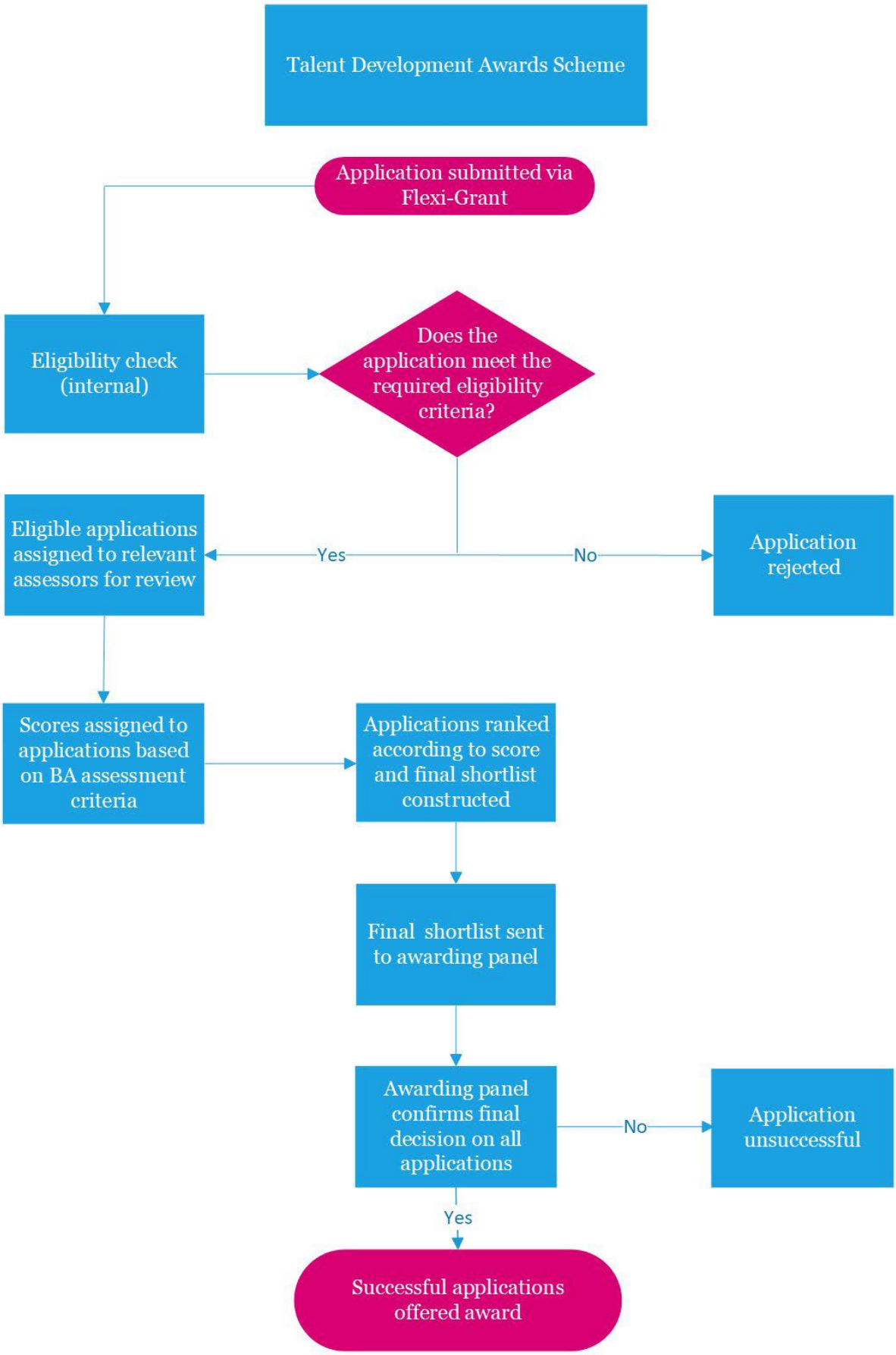
18.3 If your employing organisation approver requests modifications through the British Academy Flexi-Grant® GMS email facility, they can unlock your application, allowing you to edit it. They can do this by selecting 'Return to Applicant'. An automatic e-mail will be sent to you alerting you of this fact. Once you have completed and saved the requested changes, please re-submit your application for approval by your employing organisation.

18.4 Once your employing organisation has approved your application and submitted it to the British Academy it will not be possible to make any changes.

18.5 Please note that once the closing date has passed, employing organisation approvers cannot approve applications and submit them to the British Academy; unapproved applications are removed from consideration. No late applications will be accepted.

18.6 It is recommended that you check that your application is submitted in time. To see the details of the employing organisation approver and to check the status of your application, you should log into the British Academy Flexi-Grant® GMS and click on the link to the Application Portal where a summary of your application will be displayed.

18.7 Please see the flowchart on the following page for an overview of the application to award process for the Talent Development Awards scheme.


Talent Development Awards Scheme
Application submitted via Flexi-Grant
Eligibility check (internal)
Does the application meet the required eligibility criteria?
Yes
No
Application rejected
Eligible applications assigned to relevant assessors for review
Scores assigned to applications based on BA assessment criteria
Applications ranked according to score and final shortlist constructed
Final shortlist sent to awarding panel
Awarding panel confirms final decision on all applications
No
Application unsuccessful
Yes
Successful applications offered award

19 Outcome of Application

19.1 Once your application has been submitted, complete with the reference, and it has been approved, you will not be contacted again by the British Academy until the decisions have been made. You can track the progress of your application by logging in again to the Flexi-Grant system at any time. Results are issued by email.

20 British Academy Contact Details

20.1 Applicants in any doubt about their eligibility or any other aspect of their application are advised to contact the Research Funding Office at the Academy, where staff will be pleased to assist.

Important Dates

Deadline for application submission and organisation approval: **8 October 2025 (17:00, UK time)**

Results announced by email to address on application: **January 2026**

21 Appendix: Items Eligible for Funding from the Talent Development Awards

21.1 Eligible Costs:

- Travel and maintenance away from home for the Lead Applicant and Co-applicant(s), if any
- Travel and accommodation costs of visiting teachers and speakers
- Research assistants and teaching assistants
- Consumables (i.e. purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms, etc., and any other minor items that will be used up during the course of the project)
- Specialist software (excluding commonly available office packages)
- Costs of developing digital teaching tools and courses
- Tuition fees for accredited short courses that enable applicants to acquire specialised skills
- Costs of interpreters in the field
- Incidental translation expenses

- Organisation of workshops or conferences to advance the research (if part of the approved programme of work)
- Conference attendance (where sufficiently justified in contributing to the aims of the development proposal)
- Short-term consultancy or salary costs of expert staff
- The costs associated with online dissemination of information, including the development of podcasts, audio and/or visual recording of events, costs associated with the analysis of feedback from participants and preparation of suitable reports on activities
- The costs of preparing illustrations, including photography, acquisition of images, draughtsmanship and cartography or other bespoke illustrative material; and the costs of reproduction rights for text or images. **Note:** The case made must be explicitly approved by the Academy
- A salary contribution or payment of professional fees for the Co-applicant(s), only if they are providing consultancy for/guidance to the activity being proposed
- Small scale participant incentives e.g. vouchers
- Care for children or other relatives while engaged on activity for the award. Alternatively, application may be made for this type of cost to the British Academy's Additional Needs Funding

21.2 Non-Eligible:

- Computer hardware, including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras etc
- Books and publications
- Permanent resources and equipment or any elements that should properly be ascribed to departmental or university overheads
- The preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, or any other editorial task
- Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)
- Costs of publication in electronic media
- Payment to the Lead Applicant in lieu of salary, or for personal maintenance at home
- Replacement teaching costs
- Travel/maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours, or writing up results of research
- Apprenticeship levy
- Institutional overheads