Access Mentoring Applicant Guidance

Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships 2025/2026

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Rationale

The Academy's overarching goal is to harness the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone. As part of delivering this goal, the Academy will work to foster talent and diversity so that the UK has a world-leading and truly inclusive engineering workforce. This should be reflected in the awardees of the Academy's grant schemes.

Aim

To provide additional support to applicants from groups that are persistently underrepresented within UK engineering through the grant application process. This positive action will contribute to improving diversity in the talent pipeline and widening the diversity of applicants and awardees within the Academy's research grant schemes.

This initiative will run in tandem with the 2025/2026 Research Chair and Senior Research Fellowships call, however, **the deadline for all Access Mentoring applications is 12 March 2026**. The deadline for Research Chair and Senior Research Fellowships call is 26 March 2026.

Access Mentoring should not be used by universities as a mechanism to influence internal selection or shortlisting processes.

Candidates who undertake Access Mentoring are expected to submit a full application to the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships scheme.

Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships summary

The Academy's Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships scheme aims to strengthen the links between industry and academia by supporting exceptional academics in UK universities to undertake use-inspired research that meet the needs of the industrial partners.

Awardees are expected to:

- Establish or enhance a world-leading engineering research group
- Deliver 'use-inspired' research that meets the needs of their industrial sponsors
- Disseminate the outcomes of their research for appropriate academic use
- Become a self-sustaining research group by the end of the award (by securing substantial grant income).

Common errors in RCSRF applications

The most common reasons applications are unsuccessful are given below:

Collaboration	Unclear on collaborators, and potential collaborator plans including industrial/ clinical collaborations and clear routes to impact.
	Insufficient explanation of how the Fellowship will influence or strengthen the strategic partnership between the university and the industry partner.
Competitors	Not knowing and acknowledging competitors.
Vision	Vision and ambition not clearly explained.
Novelty	Proposal lacking novelty or not articulating how the proposed work will address a novel research question.
Realistic	Unrealistic in terms of overstating potential impact. But also, milestones, resources, and the applicant's ambition.
Support	Lacking strong letters of support from the host institution and industrial sponsor.

Communication	Poor communication skills, both written and verbal. Inconsistent/unclear information provided in the application form.

Eligibility

Applicants from different career stages will need to meet the following criteria to qualify for Access Mentoring:

1. Meet the eligibility criteria for a Research Chair and Senior Research Fellowships.
2. To be from an underrepresented group in engineering, specifically:
    - **Women**
    - **Black people including those with any mixed ethnicity with Black ethnic background(s)**
    - **Disabled people**

All candidates, including those from the identified underrepresented groups, must meet the assessment criteria for the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships scheme, detailed in the applicant guidance notes.

Eligible applicants are not obligated to undertake Access Mentoring.

Mentors

Access Mentors will be Fellows of the Academy or Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships alumni.

Mentor/mentee pairing

- Mentees will be matched with a mentor on a first come, first-served basis.
- Mentees will be matched with a mentor at the Academy's discretion.
- Mentor and mentees will not be matched based on research discipline or any other criteria.
- Mentees will be matched with a mentor up to the capacity of the mentors.
- Mentors will be from a different institution to the applicant.
- A mentor may have multiple mentees.

Mentor role

Access Mentors will provide the applicant with advice for producing a high-quality application aligned to expectations of the scheme. The applicant is not obligated to follow the Access Mentor's advice and should use their judgement and act accordingly in their best interest and that of their proposal. The mentor is not responsible for the outcome of the application. Mentors will not review applications in the scheme review period.

An Access Mentor does:

- Read the application and suggest areas of improvement
- Listen and give their time
- Support, encourage and challenge

- Provide a framework to look at options, to understand implications and to plan future action
- Share experiences where relevant
- Signpost, if asked, information and resources – including people/networks

An Access Mentor does not:

- Collaborate on research
- Apply jointly for grant funding
- Get involved in matters relating to status, promotion, or payments
- Directly act on behalf of a mentee
- Judge the actions the mentee takes

Format

Applicants will meet with their allocated mentor for a 1-2-1, one-hour meeting (approximately) at their mutual convenience. Mentors will receive a draft copy of the application in advance of the meeting. Applicants should ensure that the proposal is at a sufficient level of maturity to maximise their time at their mentor meeting.

The Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships scheme deadline is 26 March 2026. The mentor meeting will take place no later than 19 March 2026 (one week before the scheme deadline).

Meetings will be held virtually. If both the mentor and mentee agree, meetings may be held in-person. Any subsequent meetings are at the discretion of the mentor and the mentee.

Once the application has been submitted the Access Mentoring relationship officially ends. Once the application has been submitted the mentor will not provide any further advice or support on the application.

The Academy and mentor are not liable for the information that is disclosed by the mentee.

Application limit

There is no limit on the number of Access Mentoring applications an institution can submit for the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships scheme. Providing the candidates meets the eligibility criteria and submits a full application to the grant scheme.

PLEASE NOTE: Access Mentoring is a resource limited opportunity. Applicants do not need to wait until the deadline to submit their application and can be matched with a mentor as soon as the application is approved. Early submission is encouraged.

PARTICIPATION IN ACCESS MENTORING DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT THE APPLICATION WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. ACCESS MENTORING IS CONFIDENTIAL. ALL CANDIDATES ARE TREATED EQUALLY. CANDIDATES WHO RECEIVE ACCESS MENTORING ARE NOT DISCLOSED TO THE REVIEW PANEL.

Application form

Access Mentoring applications are to be submitted via the Academy's grant management system. The Access Mentoring application process is separate to that

of the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships. Applicants should ensure they adhere to the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships application guidance.

The Access Mentoring application **deadline is 4pm, Thursday 12 March 2026**. This is subject to capacity of mentors being reached and may close sooner.

1. Applicant details

Q. Applicant name and contact details

Please provide your name and preferred contact details. You should also provide the details of the host institution where the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships will be held and confirm that this is the 'host organisation'.

Q. Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships eligibility

Applicants will need to meet the eligibility criteria for the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships. Please confirm that you have understood and met the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships eligibility criteria by stating your Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships application reference number. The application reference number will be in the format of **RCSRF-2526-21-XX.**

Q. Access mentoring eligibility

To qualify for access mentoring, applicants will also need to confirm they are from an underrepresented group in engineering, specifically:

- **Women**
- **Black people, including those with any mixed ethnicity with Black ethnic background(s)**
- **Disabled people**

Please confirm whether you meet one of these eligibility criteria by selecting 'Yes' or 'No' from the drop-down menu.

Q. Mentoring

What are the key attributes you would look for in a mentor and how do you think they would be able to help you? What specific areas would you like advice on? 100 words maximum.

2. Project details

Please Note: As the Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowship application will be submitted separately to the Access Mentoring application, we understand that the project details provided in this section may not be the final version. However, they should enable the mentor to understand the proposed research project.

Q. Project title

Please provide a non-specialist title summarising your proposal.
We may make this title publicly available if successful, therefore please do not include any confidential or sensitive information.

Q. Project summary

Provide a summary of the proposed activity, **including key goals and expected impact.** Your summary should be understandable to the non-specialist reader.

We may make this summary publicly available if successful, therefore please do not include any confidential or sensitive information.

Q. Subject category

Select one single broad engineering category that best aligns with your proposal. If your proposal fits into several categories, please pick the category that is most applicable. See Annex 1 or our website www.raeng.org.uk/about-us/fellowship/election-to-the-fellowship for subject category descriptions.

Q. Keywords

Please provide a maximum of 10 keywords that describe your proposal. Please separate each keyword by a comma, for example: carbon, oil, engines.
10 words maximum.

3. Declaration

Q. Applicant declaration

Please tick the checkbox once you have read and understood the declaration written in the application form. Once the entire application form is completed, a grey 'submit application' button will become available in the top right of the screen.

Q. Marketing

Where did you hear about Access Mentoring? This question is optional but helps the Academy to understand which marketing materials are most successful at reaching the academic community to improve future communications work.

Please note that once submitted the application cannot be edited, but you may view it from your GMS account.

Timeline

Milestone	Date
Access Mentoring call opens	13 January 2026
Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships call opens	13 January 2026
Access Mentoring application deadline *This is subject to capacity of mentors being reached and may close sooner*	4pm, 12 March 2026
Mentor-mentee pairing	February - March 2026
1-2-1 meetings	Before 19 March 2026
Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships call deadline	4pm, 26 March 2026

Feedback

On completion of the Access Mentoring process, applicants will be asked for feedback via a survey on the Access Mentoring process so it can continue to be refined and tailored to be of most value.

For all queries, please contact the Research Team at research@raeng.org.uk.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The Royal Academy of Engineering is committed to diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all underrepresented groups across engineering. It is the Academy's policy (https://raeng.org.uk/media/flghp4gn/rae005-diversity-and-inclusion-policy-2024.pdf) to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged or receives less favourable treatment because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Before you commence your application, you will be asked a few diversity monitoring questions to help the Academy monitor and assess our progress on diversity and inclusion in Academy programmes. It will only be used for statistical purposes with access restricted to staff involved in processing and monitoring the data. No information will be published or used in any way that identifies individuals. The Academy will retain personal information as per our Data Retention Policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

The information will be treated as strictly confidential, nonattributable and will not be seen by anyone involved in any selection processes. You will need to complete the diversity monitoring section before you can submit the grant application form, but can choose "prefer not to say" as responses.

Use of generative AI tools in funding applications and assessment

The Academy has aligned with other UK funders around the use of generative AI tools in funding applications through the Research Funders Policy Group joint statement.

Regarding the use of AI, applicants are fully responsible for all the content presented in their grant applications. The grant process does not penalise the use of generative AI tools, but it is imperative to ensure that the application reflects the applicant's own voice and ideas. It is not acceptable to solely rely on generative AI tools to write the entire grant application from start to finish. While these tools may be used to assist in various aspects, the application must primarily represent the applicant's own work.

Applicants must provide clear acknowledgement if they have used generative AI tools in the process of writing their grant applications. This includes disclosing the name of the tool used and describing how it was utilised. The following style should be employed for referencing:

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials for background research, styling, proofreading, etc.

Or,

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials that were included within my final assessment in modified form.

National security

The Academy is the UK's National Academy for engineering and technology and seeks to increase the potential positive benefit that innovations can have for society, whilst reducing the risks of harm. Hence, in all our activities, we seek to minimise the risk that technology developed as part of work that we support could be misused by a foreign state to build a capacity to target UK interests in a hostile fashion or to control or repress their population.

There is a risk that for some grant activities, failure to protect IP and a lack of due diligence into collaborators could result in sensitive technology being transferred to and misused by a hostile or repressive foreign state. As such all applicants should ensure they are familiar with the Academy's Policy on National Security-Related Risks (https://raeng.org.uk/policies).

Subsidy control

The UK subsidy control regime began on 4 January 2023. As part of this regime, the Academy is required to report to the UK Government on how award funding is being used when applications collaborating with commercial enterprises are awarded. The regime determines the lawfulness of monetary awards made using public sector resources when given to businesses and other organisations that are engaged in economic activity.

Contact

For all queries, please contact the Research Team at research@raeng.org.uk.

Royal Academy of Engineering

Annex 1 – Subject categories

1) Civil, construction and environmental

Including aspects of civil and structural engineering; construction materials; earthquakes; wind and fire engineering; building engineering physics; construction management; numerical modelling; environmental engineering; water resources and flooding; offshore and coastal engineering; hydraulics; climate change and sustainability; waste management; geotechnical engineering; geomatics/surveying.

2) Materials and mining

Including metallurgy; metal forming; corrosion; failure analysis; structural integrity; non-destructive testing; inspection technologies; failure prevention; fabrication and repair technologies; welding and joining technologies; discovery and development of mineral resources; extraction and processing of minerals; mining engineering; materials performance; materials research; plastics and composites; structural materials (excluding materials specifically covered elsewhere).

3) Chemical and process

Including all aspects of chemical and process engineering; aspects of fuel technology; oil; coal and gas technologies; carbon; carbon sequestration; clean technology; combustion; catalysis; particulates; food processing; fermentation processes; pharmaceutical engineering; biotechnological processes.

4) Aerospace

Including all aspects of aeronautical engineering and aerospace manufacturing; turbomachinery and aerothermal engineering; avionics; radar systems; antennae; satellite systems; autonomous systems; aspects of systems engineering; airlines; materials for aerospace.

5) Transport and mechanical

Including all aspects of mechanical engineering; automotive; rail and marine engineering; transportation infrastructure; engines; turbomachinery; mechatronics; acoustics and vibrations; ultra-sonics; heat and thermodynamics; fluid dynamics.

6) Manufacturing and design

Including manufacturing management and manufacturing process innovation; manufacturing business improvement and re-engineering; CAD/CAM; robotics for manufacturing; engineering design.

7) Electrical and electronic

Including electrical, electronic and control engineering; design for electronics; aspects of nanotechnology and semiconductor engineering; lasers; optoelectronics; photonics; microwave engineering; instrumentation; display technology; solid state electronics.

8) Energy and power

Including energy technologies; electric power and energy systems engineering; nuclear and renewable energy generation; energy infrastructure; management of energy and energy resources for generation, storage, and transmission; distribution and conversion of electric energy and power; electricity supply and energy conservation; hydrogen power; fuel cells.

9) Medical and bioengineering

Including all aspects of medical and biomedical engineering; orthotics; prosthetics; ultrasound for medicine; medical scanning and imaging; drug delivery; biomedical materials; tissue engineering; medical devices; medical robotics and computer assisted surgery.

10) Computing and communications

Including computational and software engineering; informatics; web and data science; telecommunications; mobile telephony; broadband; wireless spectrum; signal processing; television, film, and broadcasting; computer and video games; special effects.

11) Special, including engineering management and Multi-disciplinary

New, emerging or multi-disciplinary areas of engineering; leadership and management of engineering business; engineering project management; business improvement and reengineering; also including engineers working in government and the armed services; engineers who have made outstanding contributions to engineering law, education or in public engagement; sectors of engineering not covered elsewhere.