

Royal Academy of Engineering

Engineering Leaders Scholarships

Applicant guidance notes 2026-2027

Deadline: 4pm 19 January 2027

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Introduction

The Engineering Leaders Scholarship (ELS) programme, generously funded by the Department for Business, Innovation, Science, and Trade, supports undergraduates at UK higher education institutions who demonstrate a passion for engineering, the potential to become leaders in engineering and who will act as role models to future engineers. These scholarships help ambitious and inspiring students, who want to become leadership role models for the next generation of engineers, to undertake an accelerated personal development programme.

Academy support

If your application is successful, you will receive an exceptional package of support, including:

- £5,000 to use on career development activities over three years
- An annual training and networking event (over a weekend in October)
- Access to Royal Academy of Engineering mentor
- Invitations to Academy events and opportunities
- Access to the Awardee Excellence Community

Sir Ralph Robins Scholarships

If your application meets some additional criteria, you could also receive the following enhanced support:

- £5,000 to support you with the cost of living at university



You can find frequently asked questions about the scheme on our website

Eligibility criteria

Engineering Leaders Scholarships
Scholarships are available to undergraduates who meet the following criteria:

- Undertaking an undergraduate engineering (or related) degree at a UK higher education institution, including those completing degree apprenticeships.
- To have at least two years' full-time equivalent (including the current year you're applying in) left until graduation. You may apply in your 1st year of university.
- Ordinarily resident in the UK (excluding for the purposes of your degree) and therefore eligible to pay UK home fees.

Sir Ralph Robins Scholarships
If you wish to be considered for the enhanced Sir Ralph Robins Scholarship you will need to have attended a non-fee-paying secondary school AND meet one or more of the following criteria:

- You have at some point been eligible to receive free school meals.
- You are from the first generation of your immediate family to attend university.
- You have spent time in local authority care.



What is a Sir Ralph Robins Scholarship?
As part of ELS, enhanced scholarships will be made to three eligible individuals to encourage and support students from underrepresented backgrounds.

The scholarships will support the next generation of leading engineers and help address the engineering skills shortfall by driving more exceptional, ambitious and diverse students to pursue careers in engineering.

Eligible candidates will need to answer some additional questions within the application form. We can only consider you for this additional support if you answer these questions.

Who is Sir Ralph Robins?
Sir Ralph Robins DL FREng is one of the UK's most distinguished industrialists. During his 48-year career at Rolls-Royce, he held many senior roles including managing director, deputy chair and then chair, serving in the latter post for 11 years. Renowned for his foresight – and unwavering belief in investing for the long term – Sir Ralph was instrumental in committing Rolls-Royce to the groundbreaking Trent engine programme. Trent engines continue to power much of the world's civil aviation fleet and are one of the UK's most successful technology exports.

Sir Ralph was born in 1932 and studied at Imperial College London. He first joined Rolls-Royce in 1955. Among many other honours, he was knighted in 1988 and elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering the same year. In 1990, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. During his long career, he has also held senior roles at Cable & Wireless plc, Marshall of Cambridge Holdings Ltd and Schroders plc, among others.

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.

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.

Reasonable Adjustments

We want to ensure all applicant can participate and present their best selves during the application process, and for the duration of the programme if you are sucessful.
If you need any adjustments or changes to support your participation in the process or throughout the programme, please contact els@raeng.org.uk to discuss your needs.
All infomation shared will be treated confidentially in line with GDPR principles. For more details, please see the Academy's privacy policy.
We encourage you to get in touch at least 10 working days before the submission deadline, so we can respond accordingly and toilor possible adjustments to your circumstances.

Grant Agreement

If you are successful, your funding will be awarded under the Scholarships and Bursaries Terms and Conditions found on the Academy's website. This agreement has been developed to ensure funding aligns with our Academy values, is used for the purposes for which it was awarded, and is managed in compliance with our own funders' agreements, UK legislation and funding best practice.



What to expect

Planning for your career development

Each year you will be given an opportunity to develop a personal development plan (PDP). This will allow you to consider how best to spend your funding, and about which activities you wish to undertake, that will help you meet your career goals.

£5,000 to spend over three years

What can you use your funding for?There are many ways that you can use your funding. Some of the activities that have been funded in the past include:

- Visits to engineering companies
- Volunteering on engineering projects
- Non-course-related learning to enhance skills

Training and mentoring

- An annual training and networking weekend early in the academic year
- Access to advice and mentoring from senior engineers and scheme alumni

Reporting

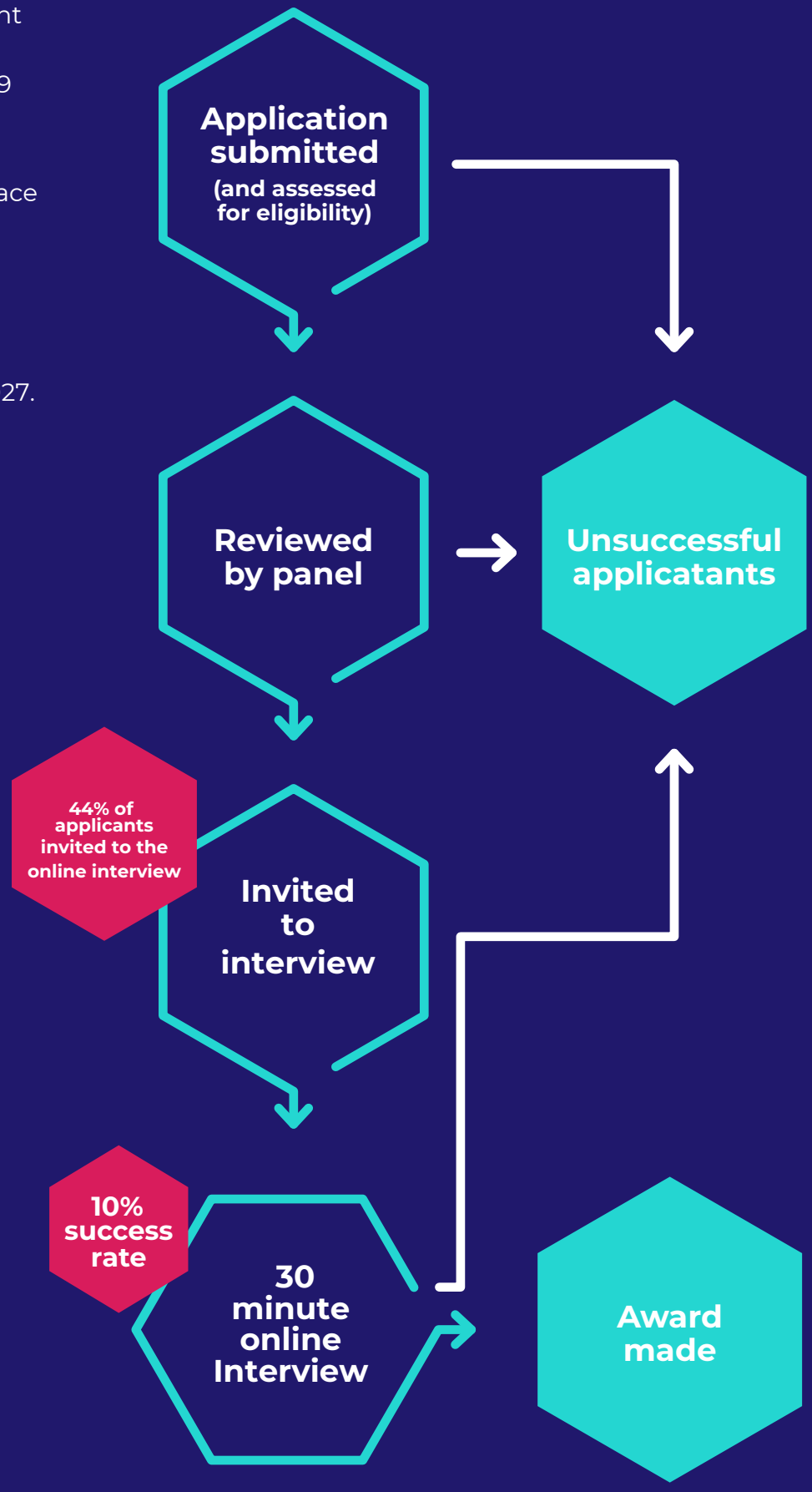
An annual report is expected each year, detailing the activities you have undertaken, how you have spent your award, and the benefits you have received. You will also be required to keep track of your expenses (and any associated receipts or invoices), using a standard reporting template, which will be shared with you, if awarded.

Application process

Applications need to be submitted via the grant management system (GMS) by 4.00pm on 19 January 2027

Interviews will take place online, on 25 March 2027.

Awardees will be announced in April 2027.





How to apply

Create an account

All applications must be submitted via the Academy's online grant management system (GMS) available at https://grants.raeng.org.uk All applicants must first register with the online system and provide some basic login details to create a profile.

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 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.

The application form has four sections. Many of the questions have prescribed word limits, which are designed to keep your answers focused. In such cases, the number of words you have used will be displayed beneath the question and updated in real time.

Applicants can download a PDF of their applications after submission, which is recommend for reference. There is only one application stage and those meeting the eligibility criteria will enter the assessment stages.

If you have any questions concerning the application or the online system, please contact els@raeng.org.uk

Completing the application form

After registering and logging in to the online grants system, select the 'RAENG Portal' tab on the top left-hand side of your screen. Here you will be presented with a list of all Academy schemes that are currently accepting applications.
Find the ELS scheme and click on 'Start an application'; here you should be presented with the 'Instructions' screen, where you will see general instructions on how to use the system, and links to the four sections of the application form given below:



You can save your work at any stage in the application process and return to it later. You can answer the questions in any order you like so you may skip some sections to return to later. It is therefore worth viewing the application early on to understand what is required.

Also, you should ensure that you have all the necessary documentation when you start completing the application, including the following:

Higher education institution endorsement
We need your institution to submit a letter to support your application, which should confirm:

- That you are studying an undergraduate degree at a UK higher education institution and that you have satisfactory academic standing
- The length of your degree programme and which year of the degree you are currently on (including if you are currently on a placement year)
- That you are eligible to pay UK home fees (not international fees).

Personal reference
We also require a personal reference from a member of staff at your higher education institution (for example your tutor or a lecturer) or, if you are currently on a year in industry, the person you report to if that is more appropriate. The reference must be on headed paper and include how that person knows you. Please treat this as a separate document to the endorsement of your higher education institution.

We recommend that your higher education institution endorsement and personal reference are uploaded with your application. However, if the author of the documents is unwilling to do so you can invite them to upload to your application themselves.

79%
of previous awardees have gone into engineering roles

Questions

Section 1: Applicant details

Q – Applicant details
You will have provided some details when you registered, please ensure that your contact details are correct including a non-university email address

Q - UK resident
To be eligible for ELS or an enhanced award you will need to normally reside in the UK (not just for your course) and be eligible to pay the equivalent of UK home fees. We may ask for confirmation that you meet this criteria at a later date.

Q – Institution
Enter the full name of your higher education institution (for example
'University of …') and not an abbreviation or just the name of the city the institution is located in.

Q - Course details
Enter the name and type of course (for example Mechanical Engineering MEng).

Q - Name of department/school
Enter the name of the department or school within your higher education institution that operates your course.

Q - Year of course
Please confirm which year of your course you are currently on. You must have at least two years of your degree remaining, including the academic year you're currently in.

Q - Duration of course
Please state how many years (full-time equivalent) that your course takes, include any placement years or year in industry in the total figure.

Q - Course start date
What year did you start your course?

Q - Course graduation date
What year and month do you expect to graduate?

Q - Are you a degree apprentice?
Degree apprentices are eligible to apply for this award.

Q - Have you applied for this award before?
Previous applicants are encouraged to apply for this award again; your answer to this question will not affect your eligibility or your score.

Q - Engineering sector
Which engineering sector do you most closely identify with?

Q – Post-16 studies
Post 16, what have you studied (excluding your current degree) and what have been your most notable achievements? We would expect to see both academic and non-academic achievements here.

Section 2: Sir Ralph Robins Scholarships

If you wish to be considered for a Sir Ralph Robins scholarship you must answer the questions below. *Please note if you do not answer these questions you cannot be considered for this additional support)*

Q - Do you wish to be considered for this additional support?
Tick either yes or no to confirm if you wish to be considered for this additional support.

Questions

Q - Are you in receipt of any kind of funding - scholarship, bursary, grant etc - either from your university or the government, that was awarded based on your personal or household financial situation? Funding could include a low-income scholarship or bursary from your university, either paid to you or towards your accommodation, a fee waiver, a hardship grant, a non-repayable maintenance grant, a means-tested maintenance loan from Student Finance etc., as long as the criteria on which these awards were made was low income or hardship

Q - Type of secondary school attended.
From age 11, have you attended a fee-paying school at any point? To be eligible for an enhanced award, you must not have attended a fee-paying school (unless you attended with the support of a scholarship). You must also be able to answer "yes" to at least one of the three questions that follow on from this question.

Q - Free school meals
Have you ever been eligible for free school meals?

Q - First-generation university attendance
Are you the first generation of your immediate family to attend university?

Q - Local authority care
Have you ever been in local authority care?

Q - Additional circumstances to be considered
Are there any other social circumstances you would like us to take into consideration?

Section 3: Case for Support

Q1 - Tell us about an issue or challenge that is close to your heart, which you think engineering can address. What engineering solution(s) would you like to see being developed and deployed, and what role would you like to play in this process? In your answer, focus mainly on how you would like to contribute, including anything you have already done to grow your understanding in this area: 250

Q2 – Describe an engineering project which you are proud of, and where you showed leadership. What was your contribution to the project, and what did you learn from it? To clarify, leadership is not necessarily about being “in charge” – leadership takes many forms and we’d like to know what you did and what you learnt.
Maximum word count: 250

Q3 - How would you put the scholarship funding to use and how will you use it to advance your opportunity to become a leader in engineering? Please be as specific as you can. We want to know how the activities you spend your money on will develop you as a leader, who is ready to solve the world’s engineering challenges. Note: The scholarship cannot be used to offset your university fees and cannot be used to pay for activities that are expected to be undertaken as part of your course.
Maximum word count: 250

Q4 - Video message
The assessment panel has found it very helpful to have a video message prepared by applicants to augment their written application. You are therefore requested to prepare a video message, using a smart phone or equivalent, which responds to the following three questions:

1. What influenced or inspired you to become an engineer?
2. What excites you about the prospect of becoming a leader in engineering?
3. If you are selected for the scholarship, what difference will it make for you?

Your video must not exceed 4 minutes, there must be no limitations on the length of time the content is available to be viewed, and it must not be password protected.

To maintain professionalism, we advise that you keep a still composure so as not to distract from the information you’re delivering.

We also advise that you sit in front of a neutral background. The video should not be a PowerPoint recording. It should be a head-shot video, featuring you from your shoulders up, talking directly to the camera.

Questions

Section 4: Declarations

Q - A personal reference

Include a letter from your personal referee who should be either an academic staff member from your course (course tutor etc) or, if you are on a placement year, it can be someone you currently report to in your role. The reference must be submitted on headed paper from either your higher education institution or employer, confirming the capacity in which they know you. A family member or personal friend cannot act as your referee.

Q - Letter of confirmation from your higher education institution

Upload a letter from your higher education institution confirming the following:

- You are studying an undergraduate degree at a UK higher education institution and have satisfactory academic standing.
- The length of your degree programme and which year of the degree you are currently on (including if you are currently on a placement year).
- You are eligible to pay UK home fees and do not pay international fees.

This letter should be on headed paper from your higher education institution and should be submitted as a PDF.

Q - Applicant declaration

This section will ask the applicant to confirm that all the information they have submitted in their application is accurate and that they will update the Academy of any changes that may affect the application.

This section will also ask the applicant to acknowledge that the Academy will disclose the information contained within the application to external parties for the purpose of assessing the application.

Q - Where did you hear about the scheme?

Let us know how you heard about the programme. The information provided will help us improve our communication strategy and will not be seen by reviewers.



Stage 2
Interview

As in previous years, interviews will take place online. Interview panels will be comprised of two persons.

What to expect

The 75-80 applicants that best meet the selection criteria at the application stage will be invited to take part in an interview. The interview will last no longer than 30 minutes and will be conducted by two people, usually at least one Royal Academy of Engineering Fellow and one alumni of the ELS scheme.

Following the event, the selectors and Academy staff will come together to decide which applicants will be awarded an ELS (including the 3 Sir Ralph Robins scholars). Those applicants eligible for the Sir Ralph Robins Scholarships, and who are among the 80 invited to interview, will be considered for an ELS in the first instance. We will then choose from those successful that also meet the additional criteria for the three Sir Ralph Robins Scholarships. Applicants will generally be provided with the outcome within 2 weeks of the interview.

About us

The Royal Academy of Engineering is harnessing the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone.

In collaboration with our Fellows and partners, we're growing talent and developing skills for the future, driving innovation and building global partnerships, and influencing policy and engaging the public.

Together we're working to tackle the greatest challenges of our age.

What we do

Talent & diversity

We're growing talent by training, supporting, mentoring and funding the most talented and creative researchers, innovators and leaders from across the engineering profession.
We're developing skills for the future by identifying the challenges of an everchanging world and developing the skills and approaches we need to build a resilient and diverse engineering profession.

Innovation

We're driving innovation by investing in some of the country's most creative and exciting engineering ideas and businesses.
We're building global partnerships that bring the world's best engineers from industry, entrepreneurship and academia together to collaborate on creative innovations that address the greatest global challenges of our age.

Policy & engagement

We're influencing policy through the National Engineering Policy Centre – providing independent expert support to policymakers on issues of importance.
We're engaging the public by opening their eyes to the wonders of engineering and inspiring young people to become the next generation of engineers.



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Key dates

The submission deadline is 4.00pm (GMT) **19 January 2027.**

If you are successful in being invited to the selection event you will be notified in March. Applicants must be available to take part in the interview process to be considered for an award. The interviews will be held on 25 March 2027.

Contact

If you have any questions about your eligibility, the programme, or problems with your application, please contact:
els@raeng.org.uk

Further information

For more information on eligibility and frequently asked questions, please follow the links to the website.