Royal Academy of Engineering

LEVERHULME TRUST

Royal Academy of Engineering/ Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships

Selection Panel Guidance Notes
Review submission deadline
Thursday 13th February 2025

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Introduction

As academics progress through their careers from postdoctoral positions into more senior roles, their workload evolves to include more teaching and administrative responsibilities. As a result, they are left with less time to dedicate to research.

The RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships aim to address this by allowing the academics to concentrate on full-time research and be relieved of teaching and administrative responsibilities. The Fellowship covers the salary costs of a replacement academic who will take over the awardee's teaching and administration duties.

The scheme and its background

These highly prestigious Fellowships are funded by The Leverhulme Trust.

The RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships are primarily aimed at early to mid-career academics from all branches of engineering who have significant teaching/administrative workload which prevents them dedicating as much time to research as they would like and that they merit being relieved of their teaching and administrative duties.

Applicants must demonstrate sufficient experience and academic status to merit the title 'Research Fellow', should hold a permanent position at a UK university and must be teaching an engineering discipline at undergraduate/postgraduate level.

Funding is provided for up to one year and it covers the salary costs of an early career academic, who will cover the teaching/administrative duties of the awardee, whilst the awardee can concentrate on research.

The Academy anticipates making **7** awards in this round subject to quality.

Confidentiality

Applications and reviews are submitted to the Academy in confidence:

- Reviewers/panel members should not discuss or share the application with any third party, without prior approval from the Academy.

- Reviewers/panel members should not discuss the application or have any contact with the applicant.

- The identity of reviewers will not be made known to applicants, but may be revealed to other members of the assessment process.

- Reviewers/panel members should not retain any copies of application documents once their role has been completed.

- Reviewers/Panel Members should not act upon any of the information they obtain through the applications, and should not engage/share information with Applicants if approached about their review.

- Any hard copies of application documents, or any electronic versions of application documents saved locally, must be destroyed/ deleted upon submission of the review.

Conflict of Interest

Reviewers should inform the Academy if they believe they have any conflict of interest, however small, which may affect their ability to provide a fair and independent review of an application. Conflicts include having a working relationship with their organisation or having a commercial interest relevant to the application.

In the case of Panel Meetings, any potential conflicts of interest should be highlighted to the Chair at the beginning of the meeting. Depending on the nature and level of conflict the Panel Member may be asked to leave the room during the discussion of the relevant application or allowed to be present but asked to not comment on it.

Diversity

Reviewers are reminded that the Academy is committed to diversity and to increasing the participation of minority and under-represented groups across science, engineering and technology, and especially women. For more on Academy diversity activity and policy please visit https://www.raeng.org.uk/diversity-in-engineering

Use of AI

Exclusion of AI in Evaluation: Assessors must refrain from using generative AI tools to make judgments or write feedback on grant applications. The Academy's approach relies on the expertise of its Fellows (or other assessors identified by Fellows or Academy staff) in evaluating applications and passing on their knowledge to the next generation. Any reliance on machine intelligence is not in line with our established working methods.

Confidentiality of Application Content: Assessors are explicitly prohibited from sharing the content of grant applications with any generative AI tool as this can lead to the submitted data being used for other purposes. Maintaining the confidentiality of the application materials ensures the integrity of the assessment process and upholds the trust placed in the Academy's evaluation procedures.

Detection of improper use of AI: At present the Academy has no formal tools for identifying whether AI has been used in generating content (although it may seek to acquire such tools in future, subject to strict data security requirements), and therefore is primarily relying on honesty and integrity from applicants. However, the use of current tools can generally be identified through close reading, particularly if the applicant has also been interviewed. Exceptionally, assessors may request a short interview with applicants that they would otherwise not have interviewed prior to confirming funding, to build confidence that there has not been improper use of AI tools.

As stated in the applicant guidance notes, 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.

Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

The Academy's research programmes are aligned with the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which is a set of principles aiming to improve the ways in which the output of research is evaluated by funding agencies, academic institutions, and other parties. The outputs from research are many and varied, and as a funder of engineering research the Academy needs to assess the quality and impact of these outputs in order to make awards - it is thus imperative that research output is measured accurately and evaluated wisely.

In the assessment of research output, we would like to emphasise that all outputs are welcome and considered valuable to the Academy. Outputs can include open data sets, software, publications, commercial, entrepreneurial or industrial products, clinical practice developments, educational products, policy publications, evidence synthesis pieces and conference publications. With regard to research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.

We value and appreciate the time and effort that reviewers give to support our research programmes. A good, helpful review for the Academy is one which assesses research on its own merits rather than by surrogate measures, such as on the basis of the journal in which research is published.

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 harms. 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.

We ask that you consider for all applications that you are reviewing whether there is a risk of misuse of IP or that due diligence has not been appropriate for some collaborators.

If you are concerned about these risks, please highlight them to the Chair of the assessment group and staff supporting the meeting. Academy staff will then consider (potentially in consultation with UK government funders and regulators) whether any additional controls should be required on that application before it can be funded or whether the proposal should be declared ineligible for funding.

The Academy's online grants system

Applications have been submitted through the Academy's online grants management system at https://grants.raeng.org.uk and reviews must also be undertaken on the system.

You may already have an account with the Academy, e.g. from being a Fellow or when you applied for events or grants, and the same login details should be used

Once logged into the system, you will be presented with the application you have been allocated to review. Clicking on the application reference number (in the format LTRF-2425-21-XXX) will take you through to the application summary page, where you can view the application and access the review form (a visual step-by-step guide on using the system is provided with this document).

Please save your reviews as often as you can, making use of the Save buttons beneath each scoring criterion. Furthermore, please avoid having multiple Flexi-Grant windows opened at the same time. I**f you do not click the 'Save' buttons at least once within 120 minutes, the system will timeout and you will lose your work.**

Once a review form is completed, the 'submit review' button will become available at the bottom right corner of the form. Please note that the submitted review form cannot be altered and will be read by the selection panel members only.

All applications are assessed on equal terms regardless of the sex, age and/or ethnicity of the applicant.

Review Stage

There are 10 Selection Panel members, and each member is being asked to review 5 or 6 applications. Applications have been assigned to Panel members as either **Reviewer 1** or **Reviewer 2.**

1. Applications that broadly fall under the Panel Members expertise have been allocated as 'Reviewer 1'

2. Applications designated to be outside your main area of expertise have been allocated as 'Reviewer 2'

Each application comprises:

- Application Form/case for support
- Letter of Support from the Head of Department
- Curriculum Vitae

The Selection Panel Meeting scheduled for **March 2025**, will rank and select **7 applications** suitable for an award subject to quality, with 2 applications as reserves in case any of the initial 7 do not accept.

The criteria for assessment of applications is as follows:

1. **Is the candidate suitable for a RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship?**
   Does the candidate demonstrate quality, experience, scientific insight/originality and independence in their research? Please refer to the applicant's CV.

2. **Quality of the applicant's proposed research project.**
   This includes ambition, novelty, and timeliness of the research project.
   Does the applicant make a compelling case for relief from teaching and administrative activities to be able to dedicate to the Fellowship if awarded?
   Please note that the 'Relief from activities during the Fellowship' section is located towards the end of the application.

3. **Host institution's support letter and level of commitment.**
   Including the identification of the beneficiaries of this research and how will they benefit? Extent of industrial involvement in the project and any societal or economic benefits arising from the research project? Please note that any letters from collaborators are optional to include.

4. **How is the applicant expected to progress after the Fellowship and the related long-term benefits?**
   How the applicant will build upon any existing or future collaborations.
   Has the applicant thought through the proposed dissemination what are the plans for public dissemination and engagement?

The review form and pre-scoring

For each application, reviewers should consider the above 4 assessment criteria. Reviewers must give each application an overall score out of seven, with seven being the most positive, and a Yes/No recommendation on whether the application should be awarded.

If a YES recommendation is given, the overall score must be above 5. Applications that score below 5 should receive a NO.

The table below indicates the quality-thresholds required for each score. Reviewers are encouraged to refer to these indicators in their comments and where possible to provide evidence from the application itself as this will greatly assist the Panel in the decision making and selection process.

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Grade	Rating	Recommendation	Indicators
7	Outstanding	Yes	Applicant is a very strong fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is very strong, strong support from host university. Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows great potential for significant impact and collaboration.
6	Excellent	Yes	Applicant is a strong fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is strong, strong support from host university. Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows potential for significant impact and collaboration.
5	Very good	Yes	Applicant is a good fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is strong, good support from host university. Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows potential for impact and collaboration.
4	Good	No	Applicant is a reasonable fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is reasonable, support from host university is considerable. Proposal is somewhat novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows some potential for impact and collaboration but may not be competitive.
3	Average	No	Applicant is not a good fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is not that convincing, support of host university is quite standard. Proposal is not novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows little potential for impact and collaboration.
2	Below average	No	Applicant is a weak fit for a Fellowship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is weak, support from host university is weak. Proposal is incremental, unambitious, and shows no potential for impact and collaboration.
1	Poor	No	Applicant is a poor fit for the Fellow-ship, case for relief from non-research related commitments is poor, little or no support from host. Proposal is fundamentally incorrect and unachievable, and shows no potential for impact and collaboration.

The Panel members are requested to complete their reviews for each of their allocated applications and submit these to the Academy by **Thursday 13th February 2025.**

This will enable the scores to be collated on a master spreadsheet, ready for the Panel meeting in **March 2025** and to give a preliminary score for each application.

The Selection Panel Meeting

Initial Selection

The Chair should be informed of any possible conflicts of interest at the beginning of the meeting. Depending on the level of conflict, the Panel member may be asked to leave the room during the discussion of the relevant application, or asked to not comment on it.

The Academy operates a "Reviewer 1/Reviewer 2 system".

Reviewer 1: whose expertise will be most closely related to the application, will be invited to lead the discussion and justify their mark out of 7.

Reviewer 2: is the generalist reviewer who will then summarise their views and justify their mark out of 7.

The application is then open for discussion by other Panel Members and Reviewer 1 & Reviewer 2 will be asked to agree an overall score if there is a difference of opinion.

Final Selection

Once all applications have been considered, they will then be ranked by score and the score of each application will be reviewed to moderate against another for a final decision on which applications should be awarded.

Selection Panel members should come to a consensus and draw up the final list of candidates for awards. A maximum of 7 awards may be made but the Panel will be asked to recommend reserve candidates, in case an offer of award is not accepted.

Where there is disagreement between the selection panel members on an application, the following process should be followed:

- Each member of the panel should be offered the opportunity to give reasons why they agree or disagree with the decision and raise any concerns;

- Following this discussion, the members of the panel will be asked to indicate clearly whether they wish for the application to proceed or not. The consensus will carry the decision;

- If there is no majority, the Chair will make the final decision.

All decisions made at the meeting are final and binding.

Feedback

Where possible, the Academy will provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates.
**Please ensure that any comments provided are gender-neutral and are
both complete and specific enough to allow the Academy to derive useful and
constructive feedback for applicants.**

Unsuccessful applicants may well go on to be successful in other activities, awards
or rounds with the constructive feedback. Scores and rankings will not be disclosed
to applicants.

Contact

If you have any further queries on the review process or on using the GMS, please
contact research@raeng.org.uk