Royal Academy of Engineering/ The Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships

Guidance Notes: Selection Panel

Review submission deadline – Monday 13th February 2024

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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.

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.

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.

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 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.

National security risks are managed in the first instance by the Academy's steering group

and its National Security Research Group, and the Academy does not therefore require expert reviewers to focus on these issues. Any concerns raised by reviewers, however, will be directly passed on into our internal processes.

If you believe there is a security risk, please contact research@raeng.org.uk

The Academy's online grants system

All applications have been submitted through the Academy's online grants management system which can be found at https://grants.raeng.org.uk and the reviews must also be submitted through the system.

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

Once logged into the system, Panel Members will be presented with the list of applications they have been allocated to review, along with some basic details such as the name and affiliation of the applicants.

Clicking on the application reference number (in the format LTRF2324-20-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).

Before the Selection Panel Meeting

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 2024**, will rank and select **7 applications** suitable for an award, 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

Each review will consist of the above 4 questions, an overall score out of seven and a Yes/No recommendation on whether the application should be awarded.

Reviewers must give each application an overall score out of seven, with seven being the most positive.

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.

Grade	Rating	Indicators
7	Outstanding	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	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	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	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	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	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	Applicant is a poor fit for the Fellowship, 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 **Monday 13th February 2024.**

This will enable the scores to be collated on a master spreadsheet, ready for the Panel meeting in **March 2024** 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 calibrate one against another.

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.

Feedback
Where possible, the Academy will provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates. Please ensure that any comments provided are both complete and specific enough to allow the Academy to provide useful feedback. 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 grants system, please contact the Research Team at research@raeng.org.uk