

Policy Fellowships Applicant Guidance

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The Policy Fellowships programme inspires policymakers to think differently and to use engineering and systems thinking to frame complex and wicked problems, and design resilient solutions. Twice a year, the Royal Academy of Engineering selects exceptional policymakers to become Policy Fellows.

This guide aims to answer the most frequently asked questions and provide clarity in the application process. Feel free to contact the programme team on policyfellowships@raeng.org.uk for more information or to book an individual call.

More details about the programme can be found on our website [here](#).

Who should apply?

Civil or public servants with responsibility for policy or service design in any sector, with the ability to influence and impact public policy in their field.

The Academy is committed to diversity of thought in evidence based-policy-making, and therefore welcome applications from a range of professional backgrounds for example economics, politics, sociology, health, planning, digital, science or engineering; as well as from a range of institutions with a public service mission, including central, devolved, and local government, arm's length bodies or public agencies, and public benefit non-profits.

When to apply?

The application window is open twice a year from March-May and September-November.

Applications for each window will be assessed at the same time, with responses provided within 4 weeks.

How to apply?

Please see Annex 1 of this pack for the most current application form questions, and when ready, register and complete the application form available via [our online portal](#) or on <https://grants.raeng.org.uk>.

Application support

The Programme team holds drop-in support sessions every Wednesday at 15:00 during the application window. Please email policyfellowships@raeng.org.uk to access the registration link.

Cost and funding guidelines

Successful enrolment in the Policy Fellowships Programme must be funded by your employer for the cost of £3,100 plus VAT. Self-funding is not an option at this time.

A 'pay-what-you-can' discount may be available on a case-by-case if you are employed by a local government, non-profit, charity, or are otherwise not funded by central government.

Please contact the programme team for more information.

How are applications assessed?

Applications will be reviewed after the closing of the aforementioned window, and we aim to reply with your decision within one month maximum.

In addition to the support of their line manager, Policy Fellows are selected on the strength of their application, including:

- A well-defined complex policy problem or technical challenge.
- Clear planned impact on policy.
- Clear expectations for the programme and plans for how they intend to use their learning within their organisation.
- A commitment to play an active role as a Policy Fellow and alumni of the programme.

We may be in touch by email to clarify the application during the assessment time. This is a common part of the assessment process to ensure we best understand your policy challenge, context, and/or any other aspect of your application.

What is meant by a complex policy problem or technical challenge?

The Policy Fellowships Programme aims to help create nuanced, holistic, and evidence-based approaches to the complex and multifaceted policy challenges faced in your day-to-day. The selection of topics below are illustrations of the kinds of policy questions that Policy Fellows might wish to discuss, although the possibilities are very broad:

- What factors influence the private sector's ability and willingness to invest in innovation, commercialisation and growing new markets?

- How can the UK drive productivity in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and construction?
- How can UK cities and regions effectively leverage the research expertise of their universities to drive industrial innovation, economic growth, and the development of deep tech sectors, contributing to the UK's global science powerhouse status?
- How does government ensure that regulatory approaches can accommodate future trends in new technologies, work demographics, threats and health hazards?
- How can policy ensure safety and ethics are embedded in the deployment of automation, AI and machine learning?
- Can a systems based and technology focused approach help the UK's readiness against Bovine TB?
- How can we ensure that infrastructure decision-making, design and delivery is fit for the demands of the future?
- How can society take a systems approach to addressing air quality within UK cities?
- How can national and local government work together to develop approaches that support more person-centred methods of service delivery aimed at tackling poverty?

You are expected to have a central research question as well as several sub-questions or areas of exploration within that main research question. There will be further opportunity to refine the policy question or challenge during the onboarding process.

Contact

For any question about the programme or application process, please email the programme team on policyfellowships@raeng.org.uk.

Annex 1: Application form questions

Instructions

- Applications will close on **[date]** at **16:00**.
 - Please contact policyfellowships@raeng.org.uk if you have any issue or question about the application process. More information can also be found on our programme website [here](#).
 - Before starting this application, please take some time to familiarise yourself with the applicant guidance pack which contains all pertinent information including a copy of the application form questions. When ready, please submit via the button at the top right of this page
- You will be asked to upload a recent CV (PDF) and a high-resolution headshot photo (JPEG). This photograph will be used on all Royal Academy of Engineering media channels, your cohort announcement, and any future promotional purposes. If you do not wish your photo to be used for these purposes, please notify the team once you have been selected for the programme.
- Policy Fellows are selected as part of a competitive process on the strength of their application. The programme's Selection Panel will meet in June 2025 and results will be sent to applicants shortly after.
- Applications are assessed on the following criteria:
 - Criteria 1: A well-defined policy challenge or issue
 - Criteria 2: Clear context and expectations for how you intend to apply your learning
 - Criteria 3: A clearly demonstrated commitment to play an active role as a Policy Fellow and future alum of the programme
 - Criteria 4: The application includes a short statement of support from the applicant's sponsoring manager

Section 1: Applicant information

Eligibility: This is to help the team assess if this programme is best suited to meet your needs. Questions include

- Are you based in the United Kingdom for the duration of the programme?
- Are you facing a complex, policy related challenge?
- Have you secured sponsorship from your employer/department to cover the programme cost?

Personal Details: Preferred name, Job title, Grade, Organisation/Department

Biography: Please provide a short biography to be used in all introductions made as part of the programme, promotional materials and the Royal Academy of Engineering website.

Personal Profile: Please upload a recent headshot photograph which will be used for the programme promotional material and on all Royal Academy of Engineering media channels and website (jpeg format only). It is a requirement to submit a photo, but if you do not wish for your picture to be publicised, please notify the Policy Fellowship team separately.

CV: Please upload a current CV (pdf format only).

Section 2 – Policy Challenge

Q1: Fellowship Focus: Please define the policy challenge or issue you would like to explore through the programme. (max 230 words)

- Please ensure you have a clear main question for this policy challenge.
- Sub-questions or sub-topics can also be provided as long as they relate to and fall under the main question.
- Please provide us with a succinct description of your policy challenge and how you can explore solutions through the Policy Fellowships.

Examples for illustration only:

Example 1

What are some critical perspectives on infrastructure design, delivery and upgrade regarding the urban greening and regeneration activities of the GLA? Some specific questions include:

- How can engineers and the engineering sector contribute to the collaborative activities in the future? What are the enablers and barriers to this?
- How can the collaborative activities be scaled across London to ensure a change in business practices?
- What are the opportunities to use our current activities to futureproof London's current infrastructure?
- These initiatives are led by the GLA in partnership with the London boroughs. However, these organisations currently lack engineering expertise. How can the public sector better attract and work with engineers?

As part of GLA's initiatives to regenerate the London boroughs, an urban greening and regeneration scheme is being piloted in a select number of boroughs. As the main observation and coordination body, GLA must equip the boroughs with the skills and expertise necessary to reinvigorate their public spaces to better the lives of its residents. I wish to explore how current infrastructure can be redesigned, repurposed, and upgraded to ensure cost benefits as well as maximum utility; understanding current engineering practices and how they intersect with GLA priorities.

Example 2

What sort of technology policy framework should the MoD develop in response to accelerating and profound technological change and its various implications?:

- What technologies are important? From a policy perspective, what is important about them?
- What are the international, societal, and environmental policy implications of these technologies?
- How can this complexity be reflected in the policy framework?
- What sorts of policy options or approaches might we need to consider?
- How should the MoD be future proofing?

In the face of an ever-accelerating wave of technological progress, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) confronts the task of constructing a comprehensive technology policy framework. This framework must effectively navigate the intricate web of challenges and opportunities posed by these advancements. Striking the right balance between harnessing cutting-edge technologies for military advantage and addressing potential risks and ethical concerns is paramount. I wish to explore how a systems thinking approach can help to design a framework that brings together all the parts to achieve national security objectives while capitalising on the potential benefits of emerging technologies.

Q2: Context and expected impact (150 words): Please set out the policy or strategic context that makes your policy challenge timely, and explain the anticipated impact of the Policy Fellowships Programme.

- What is the wider context that makes your policy challenge or issue timely?
- How will you use the insights of the programme to inform public policy?

Q3: Themes (15 words): Please identify up to five themes that relate most strongly to your challenge.

Example themes 1: Themes: infrastructure design, Public Private Partnerships, local development, sustainable investment, net zero

Example themes 2: resilience, national security, emerging technology, systems thinking, governance

Q4: Commitment (100 words): Please demonstrate your commitment to play an active role as a Policy Fellow and future alum of the programme.

- What does active commitment mean to you?
- How do you plan to continue adding value to your organisation and the alumni community through the programme?

Section 3: Supplementary information

Authorisation details: Please provide the name, position, and email of the sponsoring manager supporting your application and authorising the programme fee. Please ask your sponsor to tell us why they are sponsoring you in the box below.

Please could you tell us where you heard of the programme?

If the programme was referred to you by an alumni or colleagues, please could you tell us who. If you saw it advertised in your department or organisation, please could you tell us where. And if you've come across a social media post or other, it would help us to know where. Thank you!

Section 4: Declarations

Standard form declarations used by the Royal Academy of Engineering in all its programmes and grants. These include:

- Use of Generative AI declaration
- Application declarations

Policies and Declarations

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 [diversity and inclusion policy](#). 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 see the grant application form, but can choose "prefer not to say" as responses.

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. As such all applicants should ensure they are familiar with the [Academy's Policy on National Security-Related Risks](#).

<https://raeng.org.uk/policies> 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 utilized. You will have an opportunity to declare this in the application form.

All other Academy Policies can be found [here](#).