Access Mentoring Applicant Guidance
UK Intelligence Community
Postdoctoral Research Fellowships 2026

Contents

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Rationale

The [Academy's strategy for 2025–2030](#) is to engineer better lives by building a sustainable and innovative economy, harnessing technology to improve lives, and growing an engineering community fit for the future. A core part of this is supporting talent development and diversity, ensuring our grant award-holders reflect the diverse, world-class engineering workforce we are striving to build.

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.

The process will be run in the 2026 [UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research Fellowships](#) call (Tuesday 28 April 2026 deadline).

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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship scheme.

UK Intelligence Community Postdoctoral Research Fellowships summary

The Government Office for Science offers UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research Fellowships to outstanding early career researchers in science and engineering. These Research Fellowships are designed to promote unclassified basic research in areas of interest to the intelligence, security, and defence communities. Organisations represented in the UK Intelligence Community for this scheme include the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Home Office, the National Cyber Security Centre, and UK National Authority for Counter-Eavesdropping.

Research topics are identified each year by members of the IC, and applicants are expected to work with their university research advisor to develop and submit a research proposal that align with their chosen topic.

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The research is conducted by the Research Fellow in partnership with their university research advisor and in collaboration with an advisor from the Intelligence Community (IC Advisor).

The IC Advisor is the government representative for each research topic. They are responsible for ensuring that the UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellow's research remains aligned with aims of the research topic.

The Research Fellowships are aimed at early career researchers from all branches of science and engineering who have up to five years postdoctoral experience. Only citizens of Andorra, Australia, Canada, the EEA, Monaco, New Zealand, San Marino, Switzerland, the UK, the US or Vatican City are eligible to apply. Applicants with dual citizenship are eligible to apply, provided that at least one of their citizenships is from one of these countries.

Note: nationality restrictions and security checks are now required by The Government Office for Science. This is to mitigate risks in the researchers' relationships with UK government and to safeguard awardees. Nationality is a protected characteristic under the [Equality Act 2010](#), however exceptions for the purpose of safeguarding national security are permitted.

Common errors in UK Intelligence Community Postdoctoral Research Fellowship applications
The most common reasons applications are unsuccessful are given below:

Topic	The proposal does not meet the chosen research topic and requirements.
Track record	Applicants' research track record is not strong and relevant to the chosen research topic.
Collaboration	Unclear on potential collaborator plans including industrial/clinical collaborations and clear routes to impact and exploitation.
Competitors	Not knowing and acknowledging competitors.
Vision	Vision and ambition not clearly explained in line with the chosen research topic and requirements.
Novelty	Proposal lacking novelty, or not articulating how the proposed work will address the research topic.
Realistic	Unrealistic in terms of overstating potential impact. Also, milestones, resources, and the applicant's ability.

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Support	Lacking strong letters of support from the host institution, University Research Advisor or industrial partner and potential collaborators.
Communication	Inconsistent/unclear information provided in the application form.

Eligibility

Applicants will need to meet the following criteria to qualify for Access Mentoring:

1. Meet the eligibility criteria for a Royal Academy of Engineering UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship.
2. To be from an underrepresented group in engineering, specifically:
   - **Women**
   - **Black people (including any mixed ethnicity groups that include Black ethnic backgrounds)**
   - **Disabled people**

The Academy accepts applicants' self-declaration on the above identified underrepresented groups.

All candidates, including those from the identified underrepresented groups, must meet the assessment criteria for the UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship 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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship 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 in 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 their mentees application 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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowships scheme deadline is 28 April 2026 The mentor meeting will take place no later than 21 April 2026 (one week before the scheme deadline).

Meetings will be held virtually. If both the mentor and mentee agree, meetings may be held physically. 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.

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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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship scheme. Providing the candidate 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 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.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The Academy is committed to equity, 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 application form, but can choose "prefer not to say" as responses.

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The Academy is committed to making reasonable adjustments to remove barriers that hinder applicants from applying.

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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. Applicants should ensure they adhere to the UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship application guidance.

Access Mentoring application **deadline is 4pm Tuesday 31 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 UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship will be held and confirm that this is the 'host organisation'.

Q. UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship eligibility

Applicants will need to meet the eligibility criteria for the UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. Please confirm that you have understood and met the Research Fellowship eligibility criteria by stating your UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship application reference number. The application reference number will be in the format of **ICRF-2627-10-xxx**.

Q. Access mentoring eligibility

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

- **Women**
- **Black people (including any mixed ethnicity groups that include Black ethnic backgrounds)**
- **Disabled people.**

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

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.
> The essence of the research should be captured in the title and should be as informative as possible. Please use **no more than 10 words**.

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.
> 100 words maximum.

Q. Research topic
> Select one of the research topics relevant to your application. See the applicant guidance notes for research topic descriptions.

01	Scene characterisation using passive radar
02	Instant RF lockdown: a Faraday-on-demand system for prisons and secure facilities
03	Printed power supplies - new materials and technology
04	Exploring how unusual investment could be detected using open-source data, data visualisation tools and AI
05	Origami antennas with self actuation
06	Optically transparent antennas & metasurfaces
07	Quantum magnetometers for super low frequency magnetic field detection
08	Investigating security and assurance of building automation and control systems (BACS)
09	Attitudes and barriers to adoption of security-minded information management
10	Indicators of military stress and resilience: distinguishing chronic and acute adaptations
11	Energy harvesting to power IoT sensors
12	Preparation, quantification and characterisation of trace explosive samples
13	Detection and defeat of uncrewed-aerial systems using novel communication or navigation techniques

14	Behavioural futures: modelling public trust in tech-enabled security and crime prevention/fighting
15	Foreign influence in UK politics
16	Engineering biology for sustainable power generation
17	Human intuition and gut instincts in artificial intelligence
18	The role of machine learning (artificial intelligence) in behavioural detection
19	Barriers to bystander behaviour in high trust work environments
20	The future of insider risk – evolving threats
21	Integrating multimodality and context to automatic language analysis
22	Deepfake acoustic profiles
23	Programmable metasurface structures
24	Enhancing interviewer memory
25	Advancing forensic DNA analysis using microhaplotypes: enhancing mixture deconvolution, and ancestry Inference
26	Ocean acoustic modelling for superior environment intelligence
27	Improving synthetic aperture radar image formation through inverse modelling and Bayesian inference
28	Tracing the invisible: novel magnetic resonance isotope analysis for forensic footprints
29	Multi-vector approaches to deanonymising privacy coins
30	Bayesian calibration and inference for agent-based models of cybercrime ecosystems
31	Machine learning-based restoration of degraded speaker audio
32	Bio-inspired molecular sensors for adaptive computing and environmental intelligence
33	Mapping the transnational child sexual offending ecosystem
34	The psychology of influence: effective persuasion in the cybercrime ecosystem
35	The impact of artificial intelligence and machine learning on chemical and biological counter-measures
36	Atomic nuclear and optical clock integration
37	Quantum engineering for quantum sensors

Q – Engineering 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. Further detail around each engineering category can be found on our website (www.raeng.org.uk/about-us/fellowship/election-to-the-fellowship).

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Q. Keywords

Please provide keywords relating to the project. Please separate each keyword by a comma, for example: carbon, oil, engines

10 words maximum.

3. Declaration

> I confirm here and by submitting this application that:
>
> - I have read and accept the application guidance and other information regarding this scheme, which is provided on the website of the Royal Academy of Engineering (the Academy)
> - all the information submitted herein is wholly accurate at the time of submission, and I will update the Academy of any material changes which may affect the application
> - I meet the eligibility criteria for the Academy's Access Mentoring scheme
> - I meet the eligibility criteria for the Academy's UK Intelligence Community Postdoctoral Research Fellowships scheme
> - I will submit a full application to the Academy's UK Intelligence Community Postdoctoral Research Fellowships scheme
> - I have the express permission of any individuals whose contact details I have shared as part of this application process, to share these details with the Academy.
>
> Furthermore, I acknowledge that the Academy may disclose the information contained within this application to external parties for the purpose of assessing the application.

Q. Applicant declaration

Please tick the checkbox once you have read and understood the declaration included in the application form. Once the entire application form is completed, a grey 'submit application' button will become available to 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. You can also confirm if you are happy to receive emails from the Academy regarding future funding opportunities.

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

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Timeline

Milestone	Date
Access Mentoring call opens	December 2025
UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship call opens	December 2025
Access Mentoring application deadline. This is subject to capacity of mentors being reached and may close sooner	**4pm, 31 March 2026**
Mentor-mentee pairing	December 2025/April 2026
1-2-1 meetings	Before 21 April 2026
UK IC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship call deadline	**4pm, 28 April 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.