

**Royal Academy of Engineering/ Leverhulme Trust Research  
Fellowships****Selection Panel Guidance Notes****Review submission deadline – Monday 23rd February 2026****Contents**

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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.

We greatly value the time and effort you are contributing as part of the Selection Panel for the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships scheme. The review and selection process aims to ensure a fair and rigorous assessment. Your expertise is essential in identifying promising candidates and your role is crucial to advancing the Academy's mission to foster innovation and research excellence.

We ask all reviewers to uphold principles of impartiality, confidentiality and professionalism. Please ensure that deadlines are met to support a smooth process. We appreciate your input and thank you for your support.

## **Confidentiality**

Applications and reviews are submitted to the Academy in confidence and:

- 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.
- Reviewers/Panel Members should not act upon any of the information they obtain through the applications and should not engage with applicants if approached about their review.
- Reviewers/panel members should not retain any copies of application documents once their role as reviewer has been completed.
- Any hard copies of application documents, or any electronic versions of application documents saved locally, must be destroyed/ deleted upon submission of the review.
- The identity of reviewers will not be made known to applicants but may be revealed to other members of the assessment process.

## **Conflict of interest**

Reviewers should inform the Academy if they believe they have any conflict of interest or could be perceived by others to have a conflict of interest, which may affect their ability to provide a fair and independent review of an application. The Academy will then decide on the appropriate

course of action. Conflicts include but are not limited to knowing the applicant outside of or through work, 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 and inclusion**

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

### **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. Please also ensure that as reviewers you are highlighting any projects with strong military or dual use potential applications to the Chair of the assessment group and Academy staff supporting the shortlisting meeting.

As per the Academy's [National Security-Related Risks policy](https://raeng.org.uk/media/xnqpt0vx/national_security_risks_policy.pdf) ([https://raeng.org.uk/media/xnqpt0vx/national\\_security\\_risks\\_policy.pdf](https://raeng.org.uk/media/xnqpt0vx/national_security_risks_policy.pdf)), any concerns will be raised to the Academy's National Security Risk Group ahead of grant agreements being issued, to consider (potentially in consultation with UK government funders and regulators) whether any mitigating actions need to be taken to assure the Academy that all National security related risks have been appropriately considered and addressed.

## Use of AI

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](https://wellcome.org/about-us/positions-and-statements/joint-statement-generative-ai) (<https://wellcome.org/about-us/positions-and-statements/joint-statement-generative-ai>).

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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, reviewers 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.

## Export control

This programme has been flagged by the Academy as one where applicants may provide information that is subject to [export control law](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-strategic-export-controls) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-strategic-export-controls>). If an applicant flags that the content of their submitted application is subject to export control law, the Academy will select UK based reviewers. Reviewers of those application will need to ensure they access that application only within the UK. Please note that you will be notified directly if an application you have been assigned is subject to export control law.

## Grant programme details

These highly prestigious Fellowships are funded by [The Leverhulme Trust](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/) (<http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/>).

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

Applicants must demonstrate sufficient experience and academic status to merit the title 'Research Fellow', must 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.

## 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-2526-22-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 has been sent to you along with this document.

When completing your review through the system, it is recommended that you save your work regularly by clicking the 'Save' button located beneath each scoring criterion. Avoid opening multiple Flexi-Grant windows or tabs at the same time, as this can interfere with saving your progress.

**Please note:** progress should be saved at least once every 120 minutes otherwise the system will automatically timeout and any unsaved work may be lost.

Once the 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 – if you wish to amend your review, please get in touch with your Academy contact for support.

### **Assessment of applications**

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

1. Applications that broadly fall under the Panel Member's expertise have been allocated as 'Reviewer 1'
2. Applications designated to be outside the 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 **26th March 2026**, 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? Also consider quality and appropriateness of research methods and ethical and inclusive experimental design (including, if relevant, alignment with the Academy's Animal Use and Human Participants in Research, Innovation and Development Policies).*

#### **3. Host institution's support letter and level of commitment.**

*Assess the strength of the host institution's letter of support and level of commitment. Have the beneficiaries of this research been identified and has it been explained how they will benefit? Consider*

*the extent of industrial involvement and any societal and economic benefits arising from the research project. Please note that any letters from collaborators are optional to include.*

**4. Expected long-term progress beyond the Fellowship.**

*How will the applicant build upon any existing or future collaborations? Has the applicant proposed a robust plan for dissemination and public engagement?*

**The review form and scoring matrix**

For each application, reviewers should consider the above four 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.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
7	Outstanding	Yes	Applicant is a very strong fit for a Fellowship; case for relief from non-research related commitments is very strong; there is strong support from the 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; there is strong support from the 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; there is good support from the 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 the host university is considerable. Proposal is somewhat novel, ambitious and achievable, showing 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 the host university is quite standard. Proposal is not novel, ambitious or 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 the 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 Fellowship; case for relief from non-research related commitments is poor; there is little or no support from the host university. Proposal is fundamentally incorrect and unachievable, showing 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 23rd February 2026**.

This will enable the scores to be collated on a master spreadsheet, with a preliminary score for each application, ready for the Panel meeting on **Thursday 26th March 2026**.

### **Academy's commitment to the DORA (Declaration on Research Assessment) principles**

The Academy's research programmes are aligned with the principles of the Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA: https://sfdora.org/read/](https://sfdora.org/read/)), 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.

For applicants and reviewers 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 that you have generated.

With regard to research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, we ask applicants to use a range of article metrics and indicators on personal/supporting statements as evidence of the impact of individual published articles and other research outputs. The Journal Impact Factor in particular is unacceptable for inclusion in any part of an application, and applicants may be asked to resubmit if anything is found to contradict this as part of the eligibility checks. Reviewers who utilise the Journal Impact Factor or who rely too heavily on metrics and do not show evidence of having understood and evaluated the content of research may be asked to resubmit reviews.

### **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 not to 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 on 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 moderated 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 constructive feedback. Scores and rankings will not be disclosed to applicants.

## Contact

The Academy is committed to a fair and transparent process. Any concerns during the review process can also be addressed through the Academy's [complaints policy](https://raeng.sharepoint.com/sites/AcademyCentral/ReferenceDocuments/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FAcademyCentral%2FReferenceDocuments%2FComplaints%20Procedure%202024%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FAcademyCentral%2FReferenceDocuments) (<https://raeng.sharepoint.com/sites/AcademyCentral/ReferenceDocuments/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FAcademyCentral%2FReferenceDocuments%2FComplaints%20Procedure%202024%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FAcademyCentral%2FReferenceDocuments>).

If you have any further queries, please refer to our [FAQs](https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/faq/) (<https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/faq/>) or contact the Research Team at [research@raeng.org.uk](mailto:research@raeng.org.uk).