

Postdoctoral Fellowship applications 2026

NERC and Royal Society

Background

This document describes the internal review process to select the candidates that the University of Reading will support in applying to the postdoctoral fellowship schemes of NERC and the Royal Society.

Reading usually receives significant interest in these calls, and it is sensible, both from the perspective of the candidate and from the University, to only support those applications that stand a realistic chance of success. All candidates will receive feedback on their proposal outline, regardless of the outcome. It is therefore intended that this will be a supportive and constructive process. Further details of each fellowship scheme are available via the links below.

NERC Independent Research Fellowship

[NERC Independent Research Fellowship 2024 – UKRI](#) – these are details for the 2024 opportunity which ran in 2025 and is the most recent round

Five-year fellowships for early career researchers undertaking research within [NERC science remit](#)

Funder deadline is **16th June 2026**

Royal Society University Research Fellowship

<https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/university-research/>

Eight-year fellowships for early career researchers undertaking research in any area of the life and physical sciences, including engineering, but excluding clinical medicine

Funder deadline is **9th September 2026**

Internal Review

The success of a fellowship proposal will depend strongly on the academic record of the applicant, which should be appropriate to their career stage. Fellowship proposal outlines will be considered on the strength of ideas and feasibility, while recognising that applicants will still have some time to improve presentation, prior to submission ahead of funder deadlines.

Process

Interested applicants are asked to email fellowships@reading.ac.uk as soon as possible so that we can register your interest and direct you to the Research Development Manager (RDM) who will be supporting you through the fellowships application process.

You will need to **email the following two documents to your allocated RDM contact no later than 26th February 2026:**

- **CV.** No set format at this stage: if you already have a narrative CV (e.g. in the [R4RI format](#)) then please submit this; if not, please submit a traditional CV. This could also include a short personal statement and/or career aspiration/development plans. The CV should include publications out and close to submission (i.e. likely submitted within 3 months). It should also demonstrate evidence of collaborations and other responsible or independent scholarly activities (conference organising, academic exchanges etc.) Although applicants going forward will be constrained by funder page/word limits, there is no limit set on applicant CVs at this initial stage of the process.
- **Proposal outline, no more than 3 pages of A4.** Please respond to each of the bullet points below, in a total of no more than 3 pages, including references. These questions are informed by the assessment criteria used by the funders for these schemes.

These documents will be reviewed by relevant academic colleagues. This EoI process is primarily for the NERC IRF, but candidates can also indicate interest in the Royal Society URF. We may have another URF-specific call for EoIs in March/April. Please note that decisions for each scheme will be made by the internal review process at different times, and so you will receive feedback relating to the IRF earlier than the URF.

Mentor

We strongly recommend that candidates approach a possible mentor to support them through the application process and to discuss their EoI prior to submission. If you do not have a mentor then please contact your RDM who will be able to advise you.

Please see following page for the Proposal outline template.

Proposal outline template:

General information

- Project title
- State the Fellowship scheme(s) you wish to be considered for.
- Have you previously submitted an expression of interest to the University of Reading's internal assessment process? Have you submitted a fellowship application to a funder? If so, which, and when was this?
- Please confirm your PhD award date, and – for those who wish to be considered for the Royal Society URF - state how many years of postdoctoral experience you will have by the time of the funder's submission deadline. Please detail any periods of part-time working or absence due to parental leave or for other reasons, which may lead to an extension in your eligibility to apply.
- Please nominate one or more mentor(s); at least one should be based at the University of Reading. [NB Mentors should not be co-investigators. They could be from outside of the applicant's immediate field of expertise to assess the clarity of the application, or from within the field to help develop the science. There is an expectation that you will have engaged with your mentor(s) prior to submitting the EoI and that they will have read the EoI before it is submitted. Please note that we may contact mentors to ask them to provide written feedback on EoIs, after submission.]

Research proposal

- What is your research vision and philosophy (what are the key strategic questions that motivate you as an independent scientist)? How will your research be developed over a multi-year fellowship?
- Why is this research important and exciting, and why is it timely to fund research in this area?
- What are the key innovations introduced in this proposal? How will this lead to a step change in understanding? Try to build in references to your own past work in motivating this new approach wherever possible – this will demonstrate why you are the best person to do this.
- Please provide a bullet point list of objectives and briefly set out the research methods/approach that will be followed.
- Highlight your current skills and explain how any gaps in the required expertise will be addressed.
- What are the main risks of your proposed project? How could you address these?
- What are the potential impacts from this research and how will they be realised? Will this involve partners outside the University? Note that 'impact' here refers to outcomes outside of academia.

Career development

- Why is the proposed work and basing that at the University of Reading the right way to develop your career?
- Why are you the right individual to successfully deliver the proposed work?
- How will you contribute to the international research area and interact with the international groups in your field?