Research Fellowships: The Climate Connection

Call guidelines

June 2022

Introduction

The British Council is offering grants to support a programme of international research fellowships. This Call is to support fellowships on the theme of **cultural relations and climate action** as part of The Climate Connection programme. A [separate Call](https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/consultancy-opportunities) has also been published to support fellowships on the theme of cultural heritage protection.

Grants will be awarded to UK higher education institutions (HEIs), Independent Research Organisations (IROs) or other not-for-profit [UK research organisations eligible to receive UKRI funding](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/eligible_uk_research_organisations_v18_jun_2020.pdf). The grants will be used to fund international early-career researchers from selected countries to undertake **research fellowships** in the UK. Fellowships will be for **nine months** in duration. See below for researcher eligibility criteria for the fellowships and timeframes.

The HEIs (or other eligible research organisations) that are awarded the grants will be expected to manage and administer the fellowships, including recruitment and onboarding of the research fellows, whilst working in close collaboration with the British Council to develop and supervise the project and support the fellows to deliver their agreed outputs.

Research fellows will be expected to engage closely with the British Council throughout their fellowships, including through spending time based at British Council offices in the UK. Opportunities for research fellows to spend time based at a British Council office in their home countries or region will also be encouraged. Should this be necessitated by public health or other circumstances, there would be potential for some projects to be undertaken in part as ‘virtual fellowships’, i.e. with the research undertaken digitally, working from home. However, as far as possible this programme is intended to support researchers to spend time at research organisations and British Council offices in the UK.

A project brief for this Call is provided below. This details the research context and anticipated outputs, gives further information about the data, networks and expertise that will be made available to support the fellowships and outlines potential project outcomes and impact.

Objectives

The fellowships programme is intended to:

* **generate** **new knowledge** that builds on or complements British Council data, evidence, insight and expertise;
* **diversify and broaden the British Council’s knowledge base**, including through embedding gender sensitivity into research and providing opportunities for knowledge exchange with researchers from the global southand other regions and communities under-represented in global research production and discourse – thereby also supporting the British Council’s own [commitment to EDI](https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/equality-diversity-inclusion) and its [Anti-Racism Action Plan](https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/anti-racism-action-plan);
* support the international **capacity building and professional development** of up-and-coming research experts from eligible countries;
* foster **longer-term connections, networks and partnerships** between UK and international researchers and British Council staff;
* promote the **academic engagement and professional networking** of British Council staff and partners;
* enhance the **visibility, use and application** of the data, evidence and other forms of knowledge and insight generated through the British Council’s global programmes and network;
* contribute more broadly to the **UK research and skills agenda** (including the [UK Research and Development Roadmap](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896799/UK_Research_and_Development_Roadmap.pdf) and the Research England [Knowledge Exchange Framework](https://kef.ac.uk/)).

Who can apply?

Applications must have a single Principal academic supervisor who is an established member of a UK higher education institution (HEI) or approved Independent Research Organisation (IRO) eligible to receive UKRI funding.

The Principal supervisor will be the point of contact for any communication related to the application and, if a grant is awarded, will take the lead responsibility for the conduct of the research and the observance of the terms and conditions. Correspondence regarding the application and the grant if the application is successful will be addressed to the Principal supervisor only (and in the case of any offer letter, to their research office).

There is no limit on the number of Co-supervisors. However, applications should make clear how each Co-supervisor will make a significant contribution to the conduct of the research. The award agreement will be with the institution to which the Principal supervisor is attached (the Administering Institution) and not with any individual.

**International Co-supervisors**

We encourage proposals that include Co-supervisors based in overseas institutions, and particularly those based in ODA-eligible countries. It will be the responsibility of the Administering Institution to distribute the grant to the international Co-supervisor’s institution and ensure compliance with any terms and conditions of the grant.

**International partner organisations**

We encourage applications that outline potential to involve international partners such as NGOs, third-sector organisations and civil society groups, particularly those based in ODA-eligible countries. International partners can support the collection and interpretation of data, facilitate access to individuals and groups central to the project proposal, and facilitate the dissemination of findings to key stakeholders – including in collaboration with the British Council’s own global network and partners. However, we recognise that it may be necessary to wait until researcher eligibility criteria have been determined (see below) in order for specific international partners and engagement plans to be established.

**Eligibility for research fellowships**

This Call is intended to support fellowships for **early-career researchers**. We define early career researchers as those who are within 10 years of receiving their PhD. Allowances can be made for career breaks.

For this programme, we intend to target fellowship opportunities at early-career researchers from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and selected countries in the global south. Beyond this, at this stage, we do not specify (or limit the number of) countries from which researchers will be eligible to apply for the fellowships. A full list of eligible countries will be determined by the British Council in collaboration with the HEIs (or other eligible research organisations) that are awarded grants under this Call. Applicants to this Call are asked to indicate any countries or regions in which their institutions have particularly strong international links, reach or networks and to provide details.

Funding available

The total fund being made available by the British Council under this Call is **£100,000**. The final number of grants awarded, and their amounts, will depend on the assessment of the proposals received, the levels of match funding committed by grant recipients, and the proposed duration of the fellowships.

Grant applicants are asked to provide a statement and breakdown of the amount of funding requested for the fellowship (see *How to Apply* below) and to outline any match funding and in-kind contributions that are being committed to the project.

The application must clearly state what expenditure items the award will fund. Awards are intended primarily to provide stipends and cover travel and accommodation costs for research fellows. The scheme will not fund items of equipment which institutions would normally be expected to possess (for example, computing equipment such as laptops).

Eighty per cent of the value of the award(s) will be paid upon completion of relevant checks and the signing of the collaboration agreement. The remaining twenty per cent will be paid upon recruitment of the research fellow.

Timeframes

* Submit all application documents including project proposal, budget, and Gender Equality Statement by **26 September 2022, 24:00 BST**.
* The evaluation process will take place between **27 September and 14 October 2022**.
* Decisions on awards will be communicated to the applicants by **21 October 2022**.
* Collaboration Agreements will be finalised by **end of October 2022**.
* Subject to contract execution and due diligence checks, initial grant payments will be made by end of **November 2022**.
* It is anticipated that the fellowships funded through this Call will commence in early 2023, with a requirement that all fellowships commence by **31 March 2023** at the latest.

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| September 26 2022, 24:00 BST | Deadline for applications |
| October 2022 | Assessment of proposals and selection of awards;  Signing of Collaboration Agreements |
| November 2022 | Fellowships advertised (application deadline: early Dec 2022) |
| December 2022 | Shortlisting and interviews of research fellows |
| From January 2023 | Fellowships get underway |
| 31 March 2023 | Deadline for commencement of fellowships |

Conditions of the award and expectations of grant recipients

**Management of funds and payment of stipends:**

In all cases, the HEI or other eligible research organisation that is awarded the grant will be required to administer the funding allocated to the project, to act as the employer and sponsor for any required visa/work permit and to manage payment of the stipend. Travel arrangements (including travel insurance) for any international travel or placements agreed as part of the fellowship would be arranged by the fellow in liaison with the university or other partner organisation.

**Selection of research fellows:**

Whilst the HEIs (or other eligible research organisations) that are awarded grants will be expected to manage and administer the recruitment of research fellows, it will be a requirement that shortlisting and interview panels include at least one representative of the British Council. Selection criteria should be developed and agreed in liaison with the British Council.

**Collaboration agreement:**

All projects will be governed through an agreement signed by the British Council and the organisation that is awarded the grant, ensuring the project aligns with British Council policies and processes, that the roles and responsibilities of each party are clear, that appropriate insurances and liability cover are in place, and that there is agreement around IPR. A template collaboration agreement is provided for reference below.



**Research ethics:**

All projects will be required to adhere to the principles of the British Council research ethics policy, accessible below. This stipulates that where research is undertaken as a joint partnership between the British Council and a partner organisation, as is the case for the fellowship programme, there is a joint accountability between the British Council and the partner to ensure that research is undertaken in an ethical manner, and this should be outlined in the collaboration agreement.

It is anticipated that the projects funded under this Call will be governed by the grant recipient institution’s research ethics policy and processes, as these should adhere to the principles of the British Council policy. Should there be any conflict or discrepancy between the British Council policy and that of the partner, the British Council policy will be expected to apply.



How to apply

Please complete the application form (Annex 1) and the Budget spreadsheet (Annex 2) and return, along with your gender equality statement, to [researchglobal@britishcouncil.org](mailto:researchglobal@britishcouncil.org) by **26 September 2022**, 24:00 BST.

As noted, the Principal Supervisor must be an established member of a UK higher education institution (HEI) or approved Independent Research Organisation (IRO) eligible to receive UKRI funding. The Principal supervisor will be the point of contact for any communication related to the application.

Selection process

You will have your response evaluated as set out below:

Stage 1: A check will be made to ensure all required documents have been provided and completed according to the specifications. Incomplete or incorrect submissions will be disqualified and not evaluated further.

Stage 2: The proposal will then be evaluated in accordance with the criteria and weightings set out below.

A British Council panel will evaluate the proposals against the following criteria:

* **Academic expertise:** Relevance and fit to the project of the academic expertise of Principal supervisor and Co-supervisors:
  + **20%**
* **Approach:** Extent to which proposed development of the project brief and collaboration with the British Council and other partners will support the programme’s objectives:
  + **35%**
* **Research environment:** Level of institutional support for the academic supervision, networking, professional development and capacity building of the research fellow:
  + **15%**
* **Administration:** Capacity to manage and administer the recruitment and onboarding of the research fellow and provide pastoral support:
  + **15%**
* **Funding:** Level of in-kind support and match funding committed to the project, the degree to which the costs requested from the British Council are justified and clearly laid out in Budget spreadsheet (Annex 2):
  + **15%**

All applicants will be required to provide a gender equality statement as part of their application (see below).

The British Council reserves the right to contact applicants to request or negotiate an amendment to any aspect of the proposal, such as budget items or project timeline, in order to best meet the objectives of the programme.

The British Council reserves the right to make information on the successful applications freely and publicly available. The British Council will inform applicants as to whether they are successful or not. The British Council is not obliged to enter into further discussions or offer advice on applications. The decision of the British Council regarding these grants is final.

Gender equality statement

All applicants are required to provide a Gender Equality Statement. This statement will form part of the evaluation of responses against the ‘Approach’ criterion (see above) and must clearly describe how meaningful yet proportionate consideration will be given as to how the fellowship will contribute to reducing gender inequalities, in line with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act (2014).

The Gender Equality Statement should be no longer than one page and submitted along with the other application documents (Application form, budget spreadsheet, CVs). It is expected that some projects will have less impact on gender and gender relations and professional judgement of the applicants should be exercised to ensure appropriate consideration of the context and intended aims of the project.

Applicant screening

In order to comply with UK government legislation, the British Council may at any point during the application process carry out searches of relevant third-party screening databases to ensure that neither the applicant institutions nor any of the applicants’ employees, partners, directors or shareholders are listed as:

* an individual or entity with whom national or supranational bodies have decreed organisations should not have financial dealings;
* being wanted by Interpol or any national law enforcement body in connection with crime;
* being subject to regulatory action by a national or international enforcement body;
* being subject to export, trade or procurement controls or (in the case of an individual) as being disqualified from being a company director; and/or
* being a heightened risk individual or organisation, or (in the case of an individual) a politically exposed person.

If the applicant or any other party is listed in a Screening Database for any of the reasons set out above, the British Council will assess the applicant as ineligible to apply for this grant call. The applicant must provide the British Council with all information reasonably requested by the British Council to complete the screening searches.

Detailed project brief

British Council contacts

James Perkins, Interim Head of Research  
Monomita Nag-Chowdhury, Programme Lead – The Climate Connection  
Ruth Cocks, Deputy Director – British Council Egypt

Research context

[The Climate Connection](https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection) is a global British Council initiative, engaging people around the world through arts and culture, education and the English language and bringing their voices and work to the table to support our stakeholders and partners in addressing the climate action agenda.

Launched in June 2021, to date the programme has reached 245 million people in 209 countries through 29 projects and 7,500 partner organisations and schools. View [our brochure](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_climate_connection_brochure_-_working_together_for_our_planet_fn.pdf) for an overview of the main initiatives and partnerships and visit our new [virtual exhibition](https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/virtual-exhibition) for stories and showcases of outcomes and impact.

A particular focus of the programme, spearheaded by our [Global Youth Letter and 8000 Rising campaign](https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter/launch-highlight), has been on engaging the next generation of climate leaders and giving practical support to young people and communities most impacted by climate change, helping them share their perspectives globally and achieve real change.

The programme was at the heart of the British Council’s contribution to COP26 in Glasgow (November 2021) and is central to our support for delivery of the Glasgow Climate Pact and engagement with COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022.

The programme has sought to demonstrate that climate change is a cultural relations issue. It has sought to showcase, and evidence, the distinctive contribution that arts and culture, education and the English language can make to climate action, and to leverage the British Council’s global networks with policymakers, practitioners, researchers, artists, teachers and young people (amongst other stakeholders) to support that objective.

Ongoing global partnerships and projects include Creative Commissions for Climate Action, the ACU-British Council Climate Cohort, a global Community of Practice for English language teachers seeking to embed climate and sustainability into teaching, and collaboration with Julie’s Bicycle around climate and cultural policy.

Initiatives supporting COP27 in Egypt include a suite of Egypt-UK higher education partnerships, policy dialogues and events supporting higher education and research collaborations in climate. Our work in Schools will include a Youth Challenge Programme in partnership with Unicef and Climate Negotiation Simulation Events between partner schools giving students the experience of climate negotiation. In English, our *Climate Action in Language Education* resources and podcasts will support teachers and students across Egypt to communicate and explore climate issues through the English language. In Arts, we are launching new Egypt-focused Creative Commissions, which bring arts, science and technology together in visual pieces to raise awareness and stimulate learning. In civil society and youth, we will run youth debates in climate and launch Gender and Climate Grants for civil society organisations working with women and climate and addressing the impact of climate change on women and women’s voice at the climate negotiation table.

* **Related publications and insight:**

The programme has included a number of research projects, policy dialogues, thought leadership pieces as well as impact evaluations that collectively offer a distinctive cultural relations perspective on climate change and the climate action agenda. These include:

* Global Youth Letter on Climate Action research report: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter/climate-action>
* The Climate Connection Global Knowledge Exchange: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-exchange>
* Cultural Relations Collection essays on climate action: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/be-inspired/cultural-relations-collection-climate-change-essays>
* *Culture: The Missing Link to Climate Action* (report co-produced with Julie’s Bicycle): <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/be-inspired/research-essays/cultural-policy-climate>
* Reports from a series of global roundtables on role of universities in responding to the climate crisis: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/tcc-HE-roundtable-series#:~:text=A%20series%20of%20five%20roundtable,some%20of%20the%20challenges%20institutions>
* Research on how the global ELT sector is responding to the climate crisis (forthcoming): <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/be-inspired/research-essays/elt-climate>

An overview of this and other British Council research and evidence on climate change is available on [The Climate Connection website](https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/be-inspired/research-essays).

British Council data, evidence and expertise available

In addition to the reports and analysis summarised above, an **external evaluation** of the programme and **internal report and ‘lessons learned’ document** will also be made available to project supervisors and researchers, once recruited, as will relevant internal slidedecks and planning documents, where appropriate.

The research fellow(s) will also benefit from opportunities to engage with, learn from and exchange knowledge with the global pool of British Council staff who have been involved in The Climate Connection to date, as project managers, Technical Activity Leads, steering group members, etc. This will include members of the British Council Egypt team working currently closely with partners and stakeholders around our contributions to COP27 in November 2022.

The fellowship(s) thus afford the researchers involved an opportunity to gain insight into the delivery of climate action projects and partnerships in practice, in a global context as well as the COP27 (and COP26) contexts more specifically. The project is a chance to bring academic expertise and research insight into dialogue with British Council experts with direct ‘on the ground’ experience of working with a range of different stakeholders and audiences on cultural relations and climate action agendas. This includes government ministers and other senior policymakers; ambassadors and diplomats; sector leaders in the UK and internationally across the Arts, Education and English sectors; representatives of indigenous communities and community groups; international NGOs and other civil society organisations; scientists, journalists, bloggers and other influencers; students, young leaders and change makers from around the world.

External networks and contacts

Partnerships and networks developed through The Climate Connection include collaborations with the Association of Commonwealth Universities, YOUNGO, Prince’s Trust, EnglishUK, the UK Universities Climate Network and Julie’s Bicycle (amongst others). Many more external partners have been developed through individual projects and activities, including local, national and regionally focused collaborations across the British Council’s global network. We will connect the fellowship holder(s) and their supervisors with these partners and networks where appropriate in order to maximise the reach, engagement and impact of the project as it is developed and refined in collaboration with the British Council.

Policy and/or public engagement opportunities

The partnerships and networks mentioned above will provide the fellowship with significant opportunities for policy engagement, as will the British Council’s close collaboration around the climate action agenda with HMG stakeholders.

With the UK holding the COP Presidency from COP26 and handing this over to Egypt in November 2022, these fellowships will provide a great opportunity for early-career researchers to engage with climate policy agendas and support the British Council’s contributions to the Egypt-UK Green Partnership on climate. In addition to ongoing engagement with FCDO and the Cabinet Office, the British Council Schools team is supporting the DfE International Climate and Sustainability strategy, whilst partners on The Climate Connection are participating in a working group for culture and climate convened by DCMS. We are promoting EnglishUK’s climate and sustainability strategy as part of an ongoing partnership around our climate action work in English language teaching and learning. And we will support YOUNGO as well as the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme in the context of our commitment to building the skills and language ability of the next generation of climate leaders.

Events and outputs intended to engage a broader public audience will benefit from access to The Climate Connection newsletter and social media channels as well as wider British Council communications tools and platforms.

Professional development opportunities

The fellowship(s) will provide early-career researchers with an opportunity to gain hands on experience in the use and application of research skills and academic expertise to support the work of a global organisation. Insights will be gained into the different drivers of and strategic incentives for research when conducted outside the academic context, and the processes and structures that are in place to support this. There will be opportunities to gain experience of writing for both policy-focused stakeholders as well as broader public audiences, and to share knowledge internally with British Council experts. Over the course of the fellowship, the research fellow(s) will engage with staff from across the British Council’s global network, with a range of roles and responsibilities, and will build their professional networks accordingly.

Potential fellowship deliverables

Each fellowship should result in a written report for the British Council, which we aim to publish and share, which explores and advances our knowledge and understanding of the role of cultural relations in climate action. The specific focus of this report will be developed and refined by the research fellow(s) and their supervisors in liaison with the British Council and will be shaped by their specific areas of research interest and expertise.

Other outputs might include: -

* Policy briefs and presentations - verbal and written - for use with British Council and HMG Policy teams such as FCDO and the Cabinet Office.
* British Council Insight Articles targeting HMG and policy audiences in the UK, for example: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/insight-articles/harnessing-power-culture> and <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/insight-articles/youth-voices-climate-action>
* Curated ‘What We Know’ summaries of existing research, evidence other material on the role of cultural relations in climate action.
* Workshops or teach-ins for British Council staff, including members of our internal Research and Policy Insight Community of Practice.
* Blogs and creative media outputs
* Contributing towards the scoping and development of the British Council research and programmes in climate action, as required
* Other publications and outputs that contribute to building the evidence base for policy.
* Support for the British Council in the evaluation of the fellowship programme and improvement of future schemes.

Outcomes and impact

The fellowship deliverables will be used by the British Council to inform our own programming and to support the work of our partners and stakeholders around the role of arts and culture, education and the English language in climate action. We anticipate that the knowledge and insight that the fellowship generates will make a valuable contribution to our evidence base, help us to better articulate and showcase what a cultural relations approach to climate action means in practice, and to pinpoint the specific impact this cultural relations approach can have in response to COP27 outcomes and actions and in looking ahead to COP28 and beyond.

We hope that insight from these fellowships may be able to inform British Council contributions a variety of climate action agendas, including the urgent need to:

* raise awareness and knowledge about climate issues amongst the public and some sector areas, including awareness of COP itself, what it does and how to engage with it;
* enhance understanding amongst policy makers, institutional and community leaders of the role Arts & culture, Education and English can play in addressing the negative impacts of climate change;
* enhance representation of youth voice at different levels of the climate conversation and debate, including helping global leaders understand the needs and concerns of young people and institutions globally and in the UK by actively drawing them into knowledge exchange, dialogue and policy making;
* increase connections between various communities working in climate related fields, including linking grassroots level climate work and solutions to decision makers and governments;
* enhance representation of women in negotiation positions and decision-making at COP itself and related summits and support policies that address the impact and inequity of climate change on women and girls, particularly in marginalised communities.

Skills, knowledge and experience required

The research fellow(s) appointed to this project would be required to have:

* Interests and expertise in an area of climate research of relevance to the British Council and its cultural relations remit.
* Knowledge of global climate policy agendas, debates and fora, including UNFCCC and the COP.
* Excellent English written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to translate complex information into meaningful narrative that is accessible to a non-academic audience.
* A commitment to professional development and ability to build networks and exchange knowledge with British Council experts, partners and stakeholders based around the world.