

2024 Nuffield Foundation POST Fellowship

Application guidance and role description

Team Information

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) sits within the Commons Research and Information team although it works for both Houses of Parliament. It is overseen by a Board of MPs, Peers and external experts and provides research from across the biological, physical and social sciences, and engineering and technology.

POST provides balanced and accessible overviews of research, mainly in the form of '[POSTnotes](#)'. These POSTnotes are based on reviews of the research literature and interviews with stakeholders from across academia, industry, government and the third sector. Before publication, our POSTnotes are also reviewed by external experts.

POST runs seminars, receptions and other events on science and technology topics. It also runs several fellowship schemes with Research Councils, learned societies and charities, through which PhD students are sponsored to spend 13 weeks working at POST.

POST (and the wider Research & Information team) is committed to increasing diversity and to maintaining an inclusive workplace culture. We welcome and encourage applications from underrepresented groups.

Further information about POST is available on [our website](#).

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance educational opportunity and social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare and Justice. It also provides opportunities for young people to develop skills and confidence in science and research. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and the Ada Lovelace Institute.

Further information about the Nuffield Foundation can be found at www.nuffieldfoundation.org.

Fellowship Information

POST is offering a 13-week funded fellowship to any PhD student in a natural, scientific or social science field who is currently undertaking or has recently finished their project. The Fellow is expected to pause their PhD project, with the expectation that this time will be added to the end of the period that they are registered at their university. The Nuffield Foundation will provide funding at the same rate as the student's PhD stipend, and a travel, relocation and care grant is offered. Further information on eligibility and funding is provided below.

The fellowship lasts 13 weeks full-time (a part-time option can be arranged if required). It will be undertaken at POST's offices in Westminster (although a hybrid working arrangement that includes some level of remote working can be accommodated). Successful applicants will complete their

fellowship during 2025 with the start date to be agreed between the applicant, POST, the Nuffield Foundation and the applicant's supervisor.

A fellowship is an exciting chance to gain real-world experience of communicating research evidence to decision makers. PhD Fellows join POST (or a Select Committee, the House of Commons Library or the House of Lords Library) for short-term secondments. Their role is to support the use of research evidence in Parliament. Most PhD Fellows are based at POST and during their time they produce a [POSTnote](#), which is a concise summary on an emerging science, technology or social science topic that is relevant and timely for Parliament. POSTnotes are widely used as briefing material by parliamentarians. PhD Fellows may also contribute to a longer report, assist a Select Committee with an inquiry, and/or carry out related activities on public policy. The exact role will be determined by the POST Board or relevant host parliamentary team.

POST is a strictly non-partisan organisation; PhD Fellows are expected to abstain from any party political activity and to uphold the principles of parliamentary service, including a commitment to confidentiality and impartiality, while at Parliament. In all cases, PhD Fellows are encouraged to interact closely with people and activities in the two Houses of Parliament, including Select committees, MPs and Peers, their support services, 'All-Party Parliamentary Group' meetings and the very wide range of other activities at the Palace of Westminster. Access to conferences, workshops and seminars can be arranged.

Fellows will be encouraged to engage with the Nuffield Foundation by making use of the expertise and connections that the Foundation can offer. The Fellow will have the option to spend time at the Foundation's offices in Farringdon to meet with staff, learn about its work, attend events and possibly lead seminars. Fellows will be assigned a contact at the Nuffield Foundation at the start of their Fellowship.

For any further information about POST and its fellowships, please see our [frequently asked questions](#) page on our website.

Responsibilities

PhD Fellows may be asked to complete a range of different activities. These typically include:

- Identifying and liaising with a wide range of interested parties including industry, academia, regulatory bodies, non-governmental organisations and government
- Analysing research evidence from a range of sources, most likely outside of your specialism
- Drafting concise, understandable and impartial briefing materials for a non-specialist audience
- Responding to comments from internal and external peer reviewers

Eligibility

Applicants must fall into one of the following two categories on 20 October 2024 in order to be eligible to apply:

- Postgraduate students registered for a PhD or DPhil in a UK University in any social science (or natural science) field who are **not** in their first year of study, and are currently undertaking their PhD.
- Individuals who were, within the previous 12 months, registered for a PhD or DPhil in a UK University in any social science (or natural science) field, who have successfully completed their PhD.

Successful applicants will be required to apply for and pass a security check to undertake the fellowship (see below).

Funding available

Successful applicants will receive a grant totalling £8,000. This will be paid in two instalments of £4,000. The first instalment will be before the start of the Fellowship and the second instalment will be at the halfway point of the Fellowship.

The funding will be confirmed in a Confirmation of Funding letter to the Fellow's university supervisor, typically one month before the start of the fellowship. Upon receiving the Confirmation of Funding letter, the University should transfer the first instalment of £4,000 to the Fellow. Once payment of the first instalment to the Fellow has been confirmed, the University should invoice the Nuffield Foundation in arrears for the £4,000 as soon as possible.

The university should transfer the second instalment of £4,000 once the Fellow reaches the halfway point of their Fellowship. Once payment of the second instalment to the Fellow has been confirmed, the University should invoice the Nuffield Foundation in arrears for the £4,000 as soon as possible.

The £8,000 is intended to cover:

- reimbursement of their PhD stipend and
- the Fellow's travel and accommodation costs during the Fellowship.

The full £8,000 grant is available to all PhD students and Fellows whose PhD period has concluded. If Fellows choose to relocate to London, the grant may be used to cover relocation costs such as rent, utilities and travel. Fellows who do not relocate may use the grant for other costs such as travel, accommodation, or other reasonable costs, for example the cost of care.

You should speak directly to your university finance office if you have any questions about how the £8,000 grant may impact your personal finances.

Security

Successful candidates will be required to complete pre-employment checks. This includes security vetting to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level. All successful candidates are required to pass these checks before an offer can be confirmed. You should be aware that if you have resided outside of the UK for a total of more than two of the last five years, you are not eligible to receive security clearance to work on the Parliamentary Estate. [See here](#) for further information.

Hours

PhD Fellows can work full-time or part-time hours, if required. Fellows can work in POST's offices in Westminster or a hybrid working arrangement can be agreed. If you are successful in your application, we will discuss the hours and location of the fellowship with you.

Net conditions full-time working hours for staff of the House are 36 hours per week. This excludes daily meal breaks of one hour. POST offers flexible hours and the exact daily times of attendance will be agreed with line management.

Workplace Adjustments

As an inclusive employer, the House of Commons supports individuals in need of workplace adjustments. The workplace adjustment process prevents, reduces or removes problems you might face at work. Adjustments can be requested to help with obstacles relating to mental health, and physical or non-physical requirements. You can request a workplace adjustment if you have a disability or suffer from a difficulty or disadvantage in your workplace.

Application and Selection Process

Below is a summary of the application and selection process. In total this is a two-stage application: an initial application (**deadline 23:59 20 October 2024**) and an interview (expected late November/early December depending on the number of applications received). Both stages of your application will be assessed using the House of Commons Values, and application criteria (Annex A).

As a Disability Confident Leader, it is important that we are able to make appropriate arrangements or adjustments where necessary in order to create a full and equal participation in the selection process. If you require any reasonable adjustments, please indicate this in the indicated question on the online application form and we will get in touch with you to ensure these needs are met.

POST uses an anonymous recruitment process for its fellowships. All names and identifying information (including educational institution) are removed from applications before they are assessed at the first stage.

Initial Application

Applicants should complete the initial application before the deadline at **23:59 on 20 October**.

The initial application should include:

1. The [online application form](#) (submitted via MS Forms).

Applicants should also email the following to postfellowships@parliament.uk:

2. A two-page briefing on a topic that you think would be of current interest to parliamentarians but **should not be on the subject of your PhD**. The briefing should be completed using

the briefing template and should not contain your name or any other identifying details (please include your name in the filename).

3. An approval form, which has been completed by your PhD Supervisor and Head of Department or Studentship Grant Holder. We ask for this because we need to know that your supervisor and university would be willing to permit you to take some time away from your PhD to do a fellowship with us.

Links to both the briefing template and the approval form can be found on the [POST fellowship webpage](#). These are both .docx files.

Initial applications will be assessed using:

- Application questions asking you to demonstrate the five criteria listed in Annex A under 'skills and experience'
- Your two-page briefing

If we receive a high volume of applications, we may make an initial sift using the draft briefing only, before assessing the application questions.

Application form

The following table lists the questions we will assess within your initial application and the criteria (Annex A) against which we will assess them. A full list of application questions (assessed and unassessed) can be found in Annex B.

Question	Criteria	Max length
Please summarise your PhD project for a non-specialist audience. (Your PhD progress and subject area are not being assessed; we are asking you this to see how well you communicate research to a non-specialist audience.)	Criteria 1 and 2 (researching and communicating)	200 words
Please tell us about a time when you have used written and oral communication skills to explain complex scientific topics to a non-specialist audience.	Criterion 2 (communicating)	200 words
Please tell us about a time you have worked successfully with other people. This may include a time you have worked in a team, or a time when you have engaged with many different stakeholders.	Criterion 3 (working with people)	200 words

In responding to the questions that start 'please tell us', we encourage you to use STAR format (where you explain the situation, task, action and results of an example) as a tool to structure your answers. This allows us to understand the context and outcome of your example and can improve readability.

The [online application form](#) has been created using Microsoft Forms. If you would like to request a copy of the application questions in an alternative format, please contact Natasha Mutebi at mutebin@parliament.uk. A full list of application form questions is available in Annex B of this document.

Two-page briefing

We ask you to write a two-page briefing on a topic that you think would be of current interest to Parliamentarians but should not be on the subject of your PhD. The briefing should be completed using the briefing template (see above) and should not contain your name or any other identifying details. We want you to use the briefing template and ensure your work is not identifiable in order to make the process as fair and unbiased as possible.

We ask for you to provide this briefing to demonstrate criteria 1 and 2 (researching and communicating). As this briefing is similar to the sort of work POST Fellows carry out, it shows us that you can write in the sort of impartial, concise, accurate and readable way we aim for. We do not expect you to have written similar briefings before or have had experience writing for policymakers. We are looking for your potential, not perfection.

The criteria that we assess the briefing on are:

- **Content:** Briefings are designed to support the work of parliamentarians. Therefore, it is important to pick a topic that is likely to be timely and relevant to parliamentary discussion. Your briefing should draw on information from a wide range of relevant sources.
- **Writing style and clarity:** Briefings should be easily understood by a non-specialist audience, including people with no background in your chosen topic.
- **Structure:** Briefings are designed to have a clear structure and use headings and sub-headings to make them easy to navigate. They follow a logical order and do not introduce concepts without explaining them clearly.
- **Impartiality:** Briefings set out the relevant research and information about a topic in a balanced way, summarising the balance of opinion on issues, where applicable.

We recommend that you look at our published POSTnotes to understand the type of topics they can cover and the writing style they use. In general, your two-page briefing should:

- Summarise relevant current research and developments in this field
- Highlight the main policy issues
- Demonstrate your ability to write in a style suitable for a parliamentary (rather than academic) audience

We suggest that you read over your briefing carefully after you have written it and consider whether there is any language you can simplify, if there are concepts that need more explanation, and whether you have introduced any of your own opinions or recommendations into the briefing (which you should remove to ensure impartiality).

Interview

Applicants that are successful at the initial application stage will be invited for interview. If you are invited to interview, we will ask you a combination of competency questions and role-specific questions based on the criteria set out in Annex A. The interview will be held via Microsoft Teams and the panel will consist of representatives from POST and the Nuffield Foundation. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any adjustments that you may require when we confirm the interview.

In advance of the interview, we recommend you familiarise yourself with the role of UK Parliament and the function of certain offices within it. We also suggest that you think about how you would approach writing a POSTnote or similar briefing if you were successful in your application.

Your privacy and the data we collect

Your personal data is important to us, and we will handle it in line with our responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). We are asking you to provide the personal data set out in this application guidance (see Annex B) for the purpose of assessing your suitability for a POST fellowship, contacting you in regard to your application and arranging your fellowship if successful. We will also share this with staff from the Nuffield Foundation, and only for this purpose.

We will retain your information for up to three years, in line with our information retention policy, after which we will securely destroy it. We will process your personal data because it is in the legitimate interests of you, UK Parliament and the Nuffield Foundation. However, you still have rights over your personal data; details of those and other information about how we will process your personal data can be found on our main Privacy Notices here:

POST <https://post.parliament.uk/privacy-policy/>

Nuffield Foundation <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/about/governance/privacy-policy>

Further information and contact

For any further information or discuss any of the above in further detail, please contact Natasha Mutebi, mutebin@parliament.uk or Ben Brown, bbrown@nuffieldfoundation.org.

Annex A: The House of Commons Values and Application Criterion

Our Values

The House Service is proud of our organisational values, which will deliver our strategy. These are the values that we demonstrate at work:

Inclusive: We value everyone equally; We respect each other; We all have a voice.

Courageous: We try new things; We own our actions and decisions; We learn from our mistakes.

Trusted: We trust each other to do a good job; We are impartial; We build confidence in Parliament with our integrity.

Collaborative: We share our knowledge and experience; We work towards a shared vision; We know we work better in a partnership.

Skills and Experience

Criterion 1: Researching

You are currently completing, or have recently completed, a PhD at a UK university in a scientific or quantitative social sciences field (see *eligibility*). You have excellent research and analytical skills and can gather and assess information from a range of sources. You also have the ability to work in new subject areas.

Criterion 2: Communicating

You can explain complex information clearly, impartially and succinctly to a non-specialist audience in writing. You are able to talk about research with a wide range of different people.

Criterion 3: Working with people

You are able to work successfully within a team, whilst upholding the values of equality, diversity and inclusion. As this role involves discussing research topics with various internal and external stakeholders, you are able to adapt personal and working styles to accommodate the needs of others.

Criterion 4: Planning and organising

You are able to work independently. You can plan, manage and prioritise your workload to meet changing demands and tight deadlines.

Criterion 5: Interest in UK Parliament

We are looking to offer this fellowship opportunity to people who are interested in UK Parliament and want to learn more. You have an interest in how UK Parliament works, its role in scrutiny and legislation, and how research evidence is used in its work. You understand how Parliament and Government are different. You may also have an interest in UK Government and policy in general.

Annex B: Full list of application questions

- If you require that any adjustments are made or additional support provided to apply for this fellowship, participate in an interview or take up a fellowship at POST, then you can outline these below.
- Forename(s)
- Surname
- Are you completing your PhD full time or part time?
 - Full time
 - Part time
- What year of study will you be in on 1 January 2025?
 - Second year
 - Third year
 - Fourth year
 - Fifth year (part time students)
 - Sixth year (part time students)
 - I will have finished my registered period of study within the past 12 months
- PhD registration start date
- PhD registration end date
- University
- Department
- Telephone number
- Email address
- How did you hear about this opportunity?
 - POST website
 - Nuffield Foundation website
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - POST Newsletter
 - Word of mouth/through a colleague
 - Other
- Title of your PhD project
- Title of your two-page sample briefing (that you have emailed along with the supervisor approval form).

- Please summarise your PhD project for a non-specialist audience (200 words) (your PhD progress and subject area are not being assessed; we are asking you this to see how well you communicate research to a non-specialist audience)
- Please tell us about a time when you have used written and oral communication skills to explain complex scientific topics to a non-specialist audience (200 words)
- Please tell us about a time you have worked successfully with other people. This may include a time you have worked in a team, or a time when you have engaged with many different stakeholders (200 words).