



Enterprise Fellowships

Applicant Guidance notes
January 2026

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Stage one submission deadline: **4:00pm, 16 February 2026**

Stage two submission deadline: **Startups - 4:00pm, 16 March 2026**
Spinouts - 4:00pm, 23 March 2026

Interviews: **26, 27, 28 May 2026**
Welcome day: **late June 2026**





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Introduction



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Enterprise Fellowships

Our Enterprise Fellowships are awarded to innovative, creative entrepreneurial engineers who have demonstrated an exceptional innovation in engineering that they want to bring to a market.

Once on the programme, we focus on equipping the awardee with the confidence, skills, experience, and network of expert advisors necessary to enable them to develop themselves and their innovation.

Awardees will then serve as role models to inspire the next generation of aspiring entrepreneurs, passing on the skills they have gained and fostering a more entrepreneurial culture in the UK.

To date, we have supported over 240 entrepreneurs who have since raised nearly £500m of investment and now employ more than 1400 staff.

Full details on how you can access this support and become part of the Hub are given below.

The core aims of the Enterprise Fellowships are:

- to encourage excellence in engineering and bring engineering innovations to market for wider public benefit
- to improve the skills of the awardee, through training and application
- to develop role models of entrepreneurship
- to develop a wider alumni network to further the aims of the Hub.

We provide fellowships to:



Researchers

Wishing to spin out a company from a university or public sector research establishment (PSRE)



Recent graduates

Wishing to create a company

Overview

Enterprise Fellowships

The Academy believes that training is most effective when there is ample opportunity to deploy the new learning. Awardees are therefore expected to establish and lead a business based on their innovation and will be required to spend the vast majority of their working hours pursuing the objectives of the award.

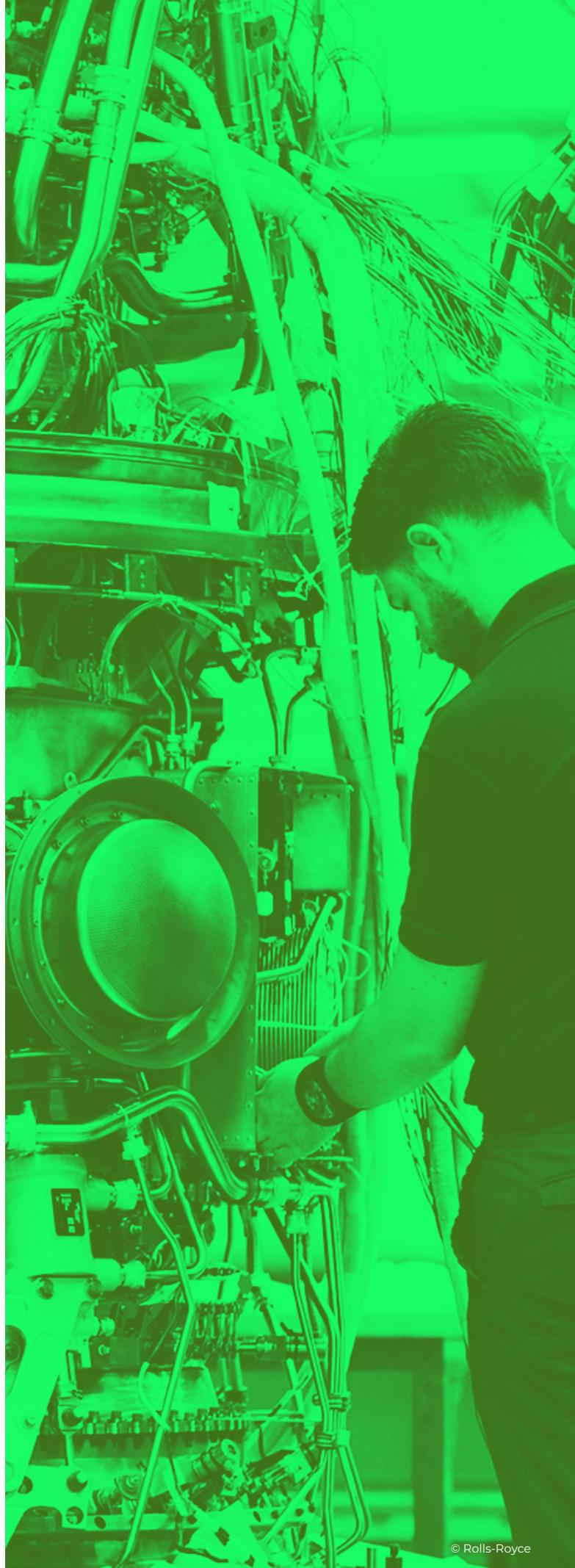
Applicants must show commitment to and fit with the objectives of the programme and may only use the award to establish or to further a business that develops an innovative product or service emerging from their past research, projects or ideas. Applicants must have appropriate intellectual property rights to use the innovation as envisaged.

Our support – all awardees

- Equity-free funding of up to £75,000.
- A bespoke training programme and one-to-one mentoring from a Royal Academy of Engineering Fellow – one of the nation's leading engineers.
- Access to our drop-in workspaces in London and Belfast.
- A cohort of entrepreneurs to learn from and share best practice with.
- Access to our network of investors, experts and advisors.

Hub Membership

If you successfully complete the Enterprise Fellowship programme you will be invited to become a Hub Member, and you will continue to receive an exceptional package of lifetime support, including continued access to our facilities in London and Belfast, training opportunities, PR support, network of investors, experts, advisors and Academy Fellows.



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Time commitment, other grants and co-applicants

We welcome co-applicants where there is a clearly identified lead applicant. The Enterprise Fellowships must be the lead applicant's only source of employment. Enterprise Fellows are required to devote all their working time to the Enterprise Fellowships programme of work. Enterprise Fellows are encouraged to apply for further funding, but these grants should not include a salary component that requires the lead applicants to reduce their FTE on the Enterprise Fellowship.

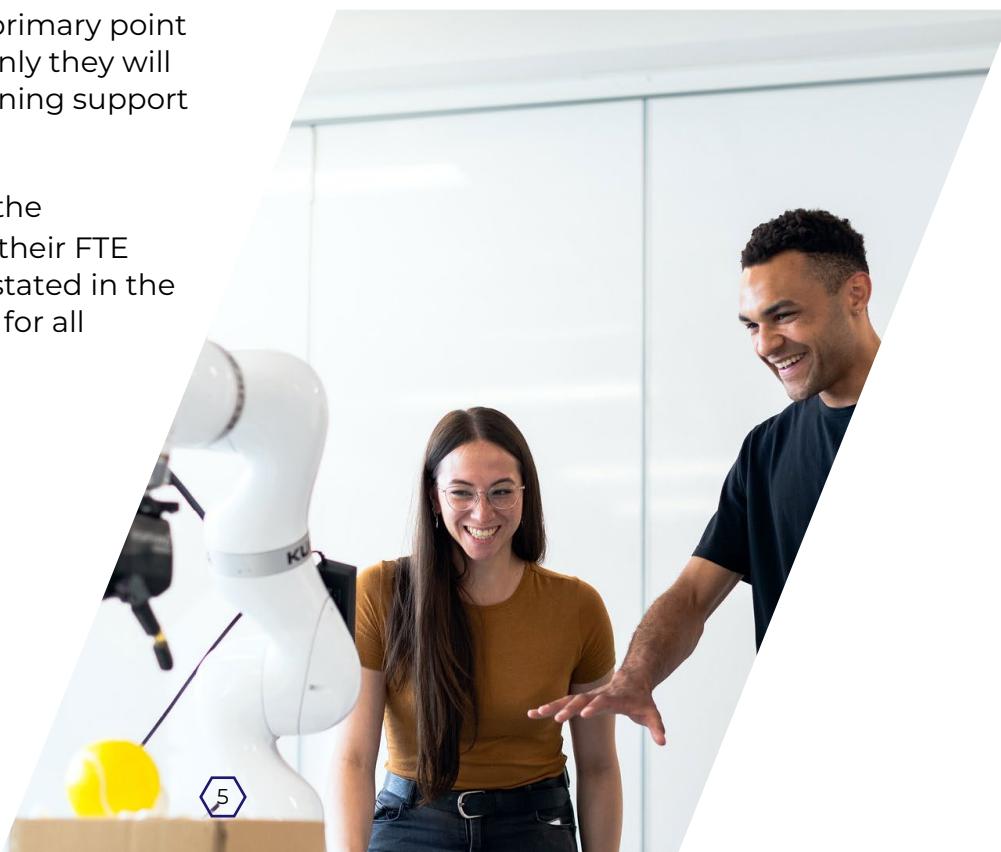
- Academics in the lead role may continue to perform some PhD supervision so that existing students are not negatively impacted, but all remaining time and effort must be committed solely to the project – lecturing and teaching are not permitted during the award.
- Co-applicants being supported by the fellowship may contribute any level of FTE, and may have other paid roles and duties, but we expect their time to be carefully monitored.
- The lead applicant will be the primary point of contact for the award, and only they will receive the mentoring and training support on offer.
- Contribution may be made to the salary costs of co-applicants, if their FTE commitment to the project is stated in the equity table. See 'Eligible costs for all Fellowships' for more details.

For more common questions, please see the [FAQs](#) on the website.

Diversity & Inclusion

The Royal Academy of Engineering is committed to 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, gender and sexual orientation.

If you are successful, we would like to support you to achieve a balance between your personal and work demands. We are happy to discuss individual requirements and consider part-time and other flexible working arrangements. Please let us know if there is any support that we can offer during your time at the Academy (such as access, assistance, alternative formats, interpreters or disabled parking). Contact details are on page 19.





Researchers

We support outstanding entrepreneurial engineers, working at a UK university or PSRE, or Republic of Ireland to spin out a business based upon their research, or the research of their team.

Eligibility criteria

- All levels of academic or researcher are eligible, from PhD student through to professor/director.
- Must be working in research at a UK higher education institute (HEI) or Irish university.
- Applicants **must be employed** directly by the HEI at the time of application and for the full duration of the award.
- Applicants must have a PhD or equivalent experience. PhD students are eligible to apply, but must receive their **PhD before 31 May 2026** or the offer will be withdrawn.
- Must be an engineering or technology invention or innovation that the applicant has been involved in the development of.
- Technology must be **technology readiness level (TRL) four** or above – for example it has been shown to work under test conditions.
- The hosting institution must be committed to transferring and exploiting the technology via a spinout, in which the Enterprise Fellow will be playing **a leading role as CEO/COO**.
- The lead applicant should have the highest equity stake of all individuals receiving equity (note, an organisation may have a higher equity stake than the lead).
- The business proposal must not have been the subject of an Enterprise Fellowships application submitted on two or more previous occasions.
- We do not support applicants where the spinout has raised over £500,000 in equity funding, nor where the applicant is not currently based at the university, either as an employee or PhD student.
- The hosting institution should **not** expect to have an equity stake in the company that is **greater than 50%** unless it can demonstrate some form of additional private investment into the spin-out, beyond what is normally expected of a host (grant funding and performing the standard technology transfer office (TTO) support function do not count as additional investment).



**£75,000
funding
+ support
package**

Funding includes:

- **up to £60,000** in salary support
- **£15,000 (or more)** support costs for the continued development of the innovation and associated spin-out company

Recent graduates

In partnership with the 1851 Royal Commission and the ERA Foundation, we support recent engineering and design graduates in making their business a success. Recipients of the prize will focus on developing their innovation, developing their skills through training and implementation, and passing on the skills they have learned by acting as a role model.



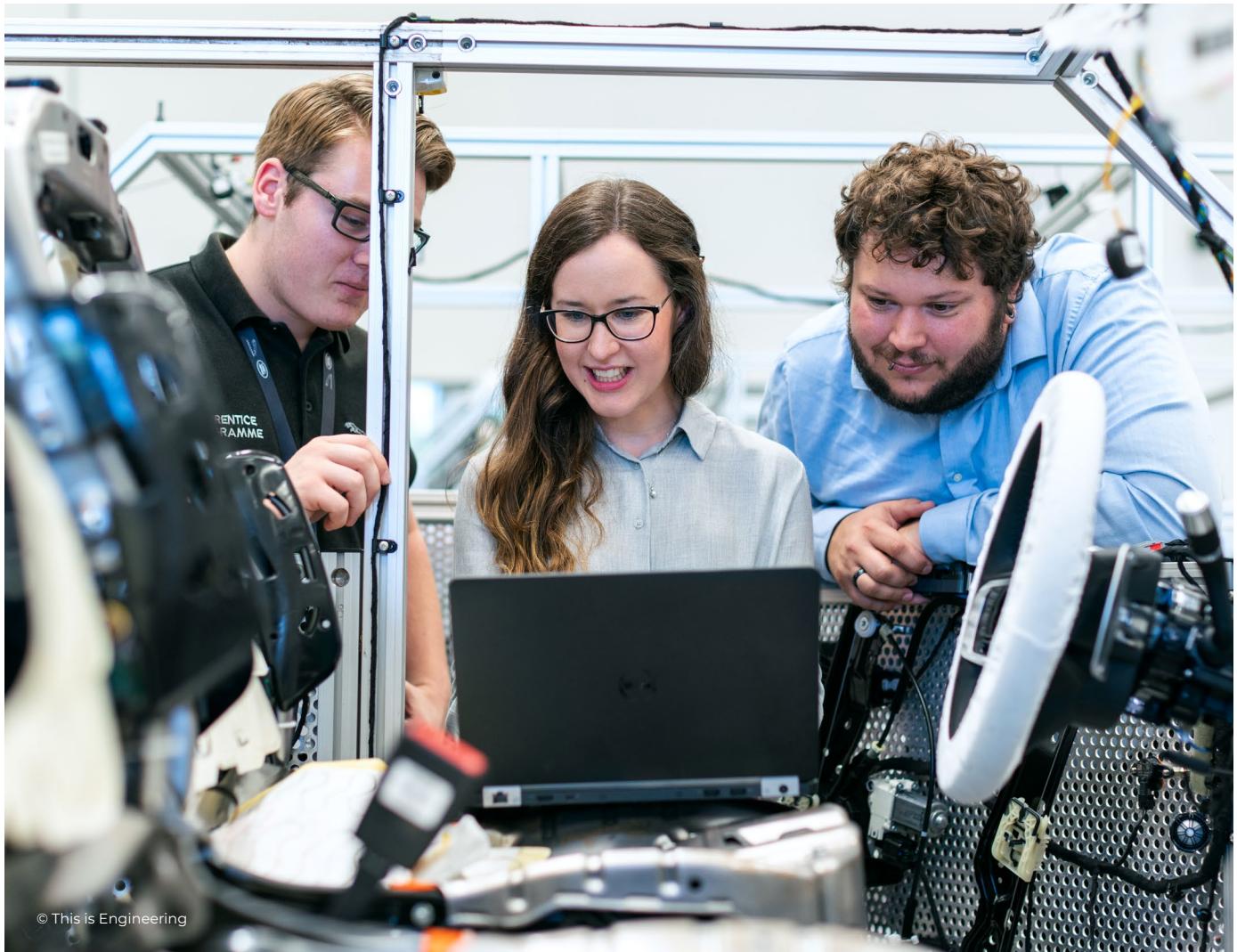
ERA
FOUNDATION

The fellowships are generously funded by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 and the ERA Foundation.

Awardees shall be known as '1851 Royal Commission Enterprise Fellows' and 'ERA Enterprise Fellows.' Additionally, awardees will have access to further support and networking activities from their respective funder, through participation in events and access to their extensive alumni networks.



© University of Leeds



Eligibility criteria

- Must be an engineering or technology invention or innovation that the applicant helped to develop and it must be based in the UK.
- The business proposal **must not** have been the subject of an application in the previous round of Enterprise Fellowships, nor should an application for this proposal have been submitted on two or more previous occasions.
- Must be currently studying for, or have been awarded, their **first undergraduate degree**, no earlier than **1 January 2021**. The degree must be in engineering, design, IT, business, or a related discipline, and current students must receive their degree before they start the fellowship or the offer will be withdrawn.
- Technology must be **TRL four** or above – for example it has been shown to work under test conditions, and is not just a theory.

- The fellowship is intended for applicants who lack the support structure provided by well-established employers. You may apply while employed by such an established organisation, but must leave prior to commencing the award. You may be employed by the startup business to which the application relates, although it must still be in the startup phase.
- You may have previously been through an accelerator programme, but cannot be on one during the period of the award.
- You **must not** have raised more than £500,000 in equity funding (note, you may not have raised any equity funding at all, and this is fine with us).

Eligible costs for all fellowships

Salary costs – research route only

- Salary support does cover income tax, National Insurance, pensions, or maternity/paternity/sick pay, up to the £60,000 limit.
- You may allocate the budget between any number of co-applicants, but they must be listed in the equity table and working on the award. Support staff and tech transfer officers are not eligible.
- If the gross salary costs exceed £60,000 the remainder must be covered by other means, normally the host institution.
- Full economic costs (FEC) are not payable under this programme.
- Research costs, administration costs or running costs of the host institution are not allowable.

Cash prize and personal award

- It should be spent to support your living costs and your growth as an entrepreneur while working on the fellowship programme. There are no restrictions on the way you use the money however, we will ask you for reports on your expenditure.

Allowed cost under the 'support costs' element

- Travel, equipment, consultancy fees, project specific consumables, legal costs (up to £3000), accountancy, prototyping, product testing, marketing, advertising, trademarks, website, training, conferences.
- If funds are to be spent on patents, detail how/if this will affect the ownership of related IPR.
- Any individual piece of equipment must have a value of less than £10,000.

Disallowed costs under the 'support costs' element

- Salary costs, of yourself or anyone else.
- Manufacturing costs, other than prototypes.
- Rent and utilities.

Training costs

- We will cover reasonable travel and accommodation costs incurred attending compulsory training days, so do not include such costs.



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What to expect

Training and mentoring

- Awardees will be provided with a mentor with extensive business experience. They will provide support and guidance throughout the fellowship.
- You will receive approximately 15 days mandatory training over the course of the fellowship.
- The training programme, delivered in-person only, will be interactive, involving individual and group work and role plays with your fellow entrepreneurs. It will provide you with the skills necessary to put business tools and techniques into practice.
- We will also provide a reading list to cover the more theoretical side.
- We cannot always guarantee that the mentors will all have entered into an agreement relating to their role and how they deal with confidential information, as it is sometimes impractical to arrange this. You will be notified in advance by the programme team if your proposed mentor has signed a confidentiality agreement. It will be up to you to decide whether you would like to proceed if that is not the case.
- While applying for and taking part in any Enterprise Hub activities, make sure you only share information with the Academy or any external parties which you're free to share. For example, you might have agreements with co-founders, shareholders etc. where you need their consent before sharing certain information.

Reporting

We use the reports to identify what support you need, and the report will form the basis of your business plan. We require the following regular updates on progress:

- Monthly catch-up call.
- Quarterly progress report.
- Six-month panel review.
- Annual follow-up report.

Signposting

We will be on hand throughout the award period and beyond to signpost additional opportunities available through the Academy and our network, such as:

- Grant/funding programmes.
- Networking events.
- Pitching opportunities.
- Building a public/media profile.
- Introductions to expert advisors.

Your commitment

- The fellowship is a full-time award in which awardees are expected to be fully engaged and committed. The lead applicant cannot hold any other form of employment during the award.
- All mandatory training days must be attended and prioritised.
- Awardees are expected to keep in regular contact with the Enterprise Hub team and their mentor, strive to be a role model, adhere to the Code of Conduct and seek to engage with their peers in the cohort.

• All awards run from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027.

Grant agreement

If you are successful, your funding will be awarded under the RD&I Terms and Conditions found on the Academy's [website](#).

This agreement has been developed to ensure funding aligns with our Academy values, is used for the purposes for which it was awarded, and is managed in compliance with our own funders' agreements, UK legislation and funding best practice.

How to apply

Online application system

All applications must be submitted by the lead applicant via the online system, available here: <https://grants.raeng.org.uk>.

All applicants must first register with the system and provide some basic log-in details to create a profile.

Once logged in, select **My Applications** in the top-left corner, and choose an application from the list of currently open programmes.

The application process has two stages, as detailed on the next page. Applicants based at a university will require their official approval to submit, so please allow sufficient time to comply with your employer's internal processes.

Stage 1 and stage 2 application questions are listed in the next few pages. Hints and tips on what to include in your application is available on the website and in the application form itself. At any stage in the application process you can save your work, log-off and return to it at a later time.

The panel of experts who review applications are external to the Academy. They are carefully chosen for their expertise and reputation in the sector, but might not have entered into a confidentiality agreement for their role as, given the scale and nature, it is often impractical to do so. It is at your discretion to decide on the information you are comfortable sharing.

Please ensure you answer the multiple choice questions at the beginning of the application first, because your response to these questions changes the content of the application form.

Researcher Enterprise Fellowships only

The university's technology transfer office (TTO) and your head of department will be required to submit information in support of the application, so contacting them as early as possible is advised. The below guidance also covers their sections, so please pass this document on to them.

Graduate Enterprise Fellowships only

Applicants are expected to obtain one letter of reference, akin to a job reference. The letters must be written by someone who is independent to the applicant, and should comment on the applicant's entrepreneurial potential, the business model and the innovation.

Contact

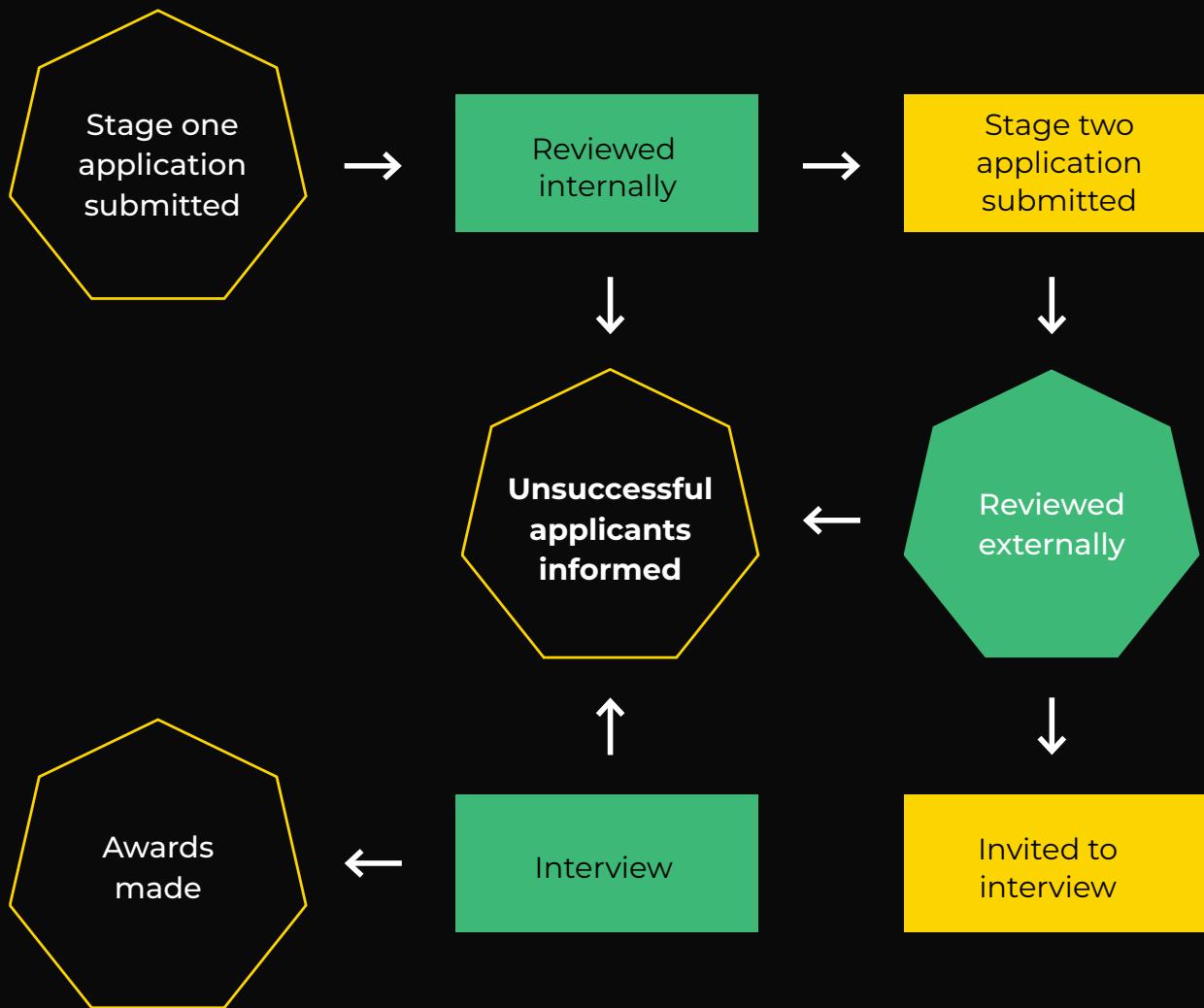
If you have any questions about the application process or the online system contact the Enterprise Hub team at

enterprisefellowships@raeng.org.uk

Application process

Assessment of applications

The assessment process is as follows:



Stage one

In this short application form you are asked to give us a brief outline of your background, the technology and how advanced your plans are. This stage is about 500 words long, with some tick boxes and drop down lists to select from. It is designed to be quick and easy to complete.

This stage does not assess how good the idea is, but whether you and the idea are suitable for our programme. It will be considered by Academy staff, so please write for the lay person and avoid technical jargon.

Stage two

This part of the application is more detailed at about 2,500 words long and will consider how good the idea is, and your potential to lead a startup. You will need to provide more information about yourself, the technology and the business model. This part of the application will be reviewed by a panel of experts and, if successful, you will be invited to interview.

Application content

Stage one

Stage one asks you to summarise three aspects of your proposal. Firstly, what is your background and how are you involved in the project. Secondly, what problem you are solving, and how well developed is the technology. Thirdly, how well developed is the commercialisation plan. It allows us to check your eligibility and assess if you are the right person to receive our support, if the technology is within our remit, and if this is the right time for you to join our programme.

Note that while we only allow an applicant to apply to us twice, **stage one does not count as an application** and you may submit to stage one as many times as you like.

Additionally, you can submit your stage one application at any time - the earlier you submit your application the more time you will have to complete stage two.

Stage two

This is the full application, where you provide details on yourself, the team, the innovation, the outline of a commercialisation plan.

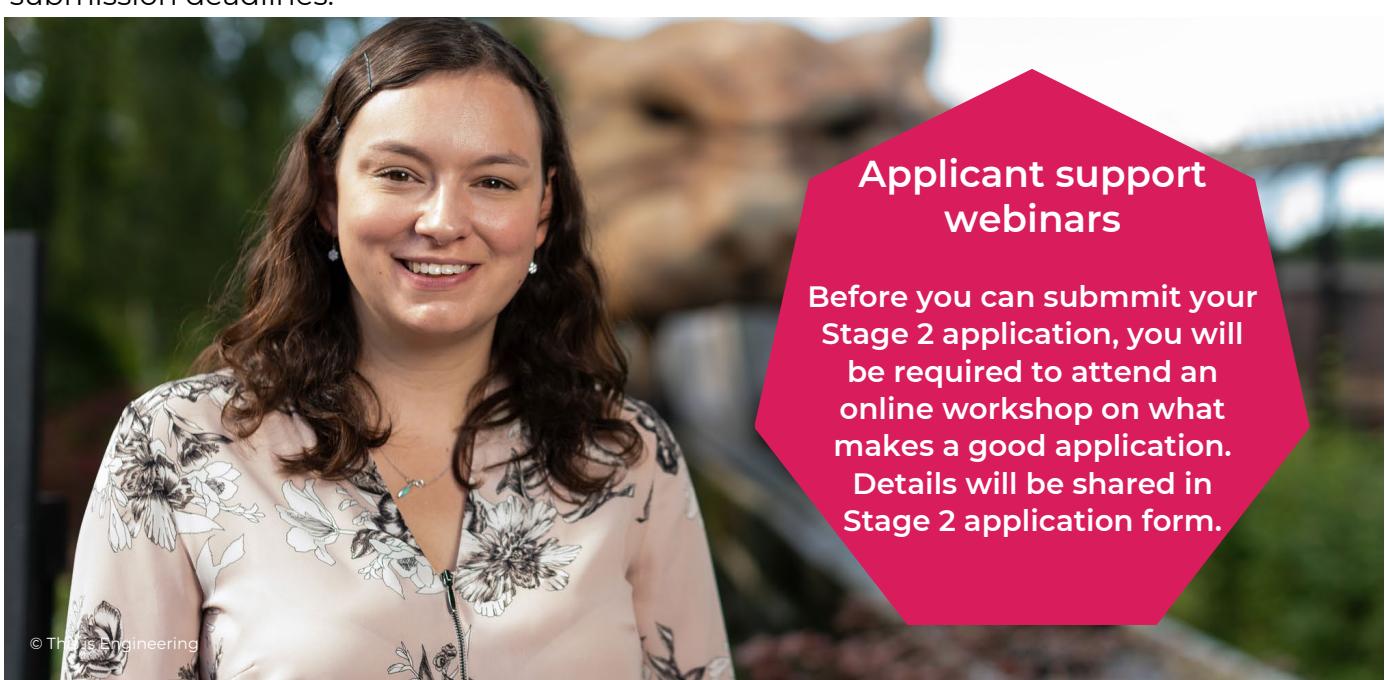
This stage is about 2,500 words with questions testing the following five areas:

1. The novelty and engineering in the technology and market opportunity,
2. The problem - market need, target audience,
3. The solution - quantifiable impact of your proposition,
4. If now is the right time to apply for the programme,
5. The route to market strategy.

You will also be asked to supply a video pitch, pitch deck and your CV.

Graduate applicants are also asked to provide a letter of reference.

Academic applicants are asked to get their Technology Transfer team and Head of Department to complete relevant sections. Be sure to approach them well ahead of the submission deadlines.



Assessment criteria

The Selection Panel is composed primarily of Fellows of the Academy, plus additional investors and knowledge transfer experts. Each application will be reviewed by at least two panel members using the below criteria and weighting.

Applicants with the highest scores will then be invited to interview. Panel scores do not count at the interview stage, but review comments will be made available to the interview panel.

Criterium	Weighting	Value
1 – The Applicant	3	15
2 – The Team	1	5
3 – The Engineering	1	5
4 – The IP strategy	1	5
5 – The Market	1	5
6 – The Go to Market strategy	1	5
Total		40

1 – The applicant

- Their role, ambition and level of commitment
- Scope for the benefits and timeliness of the fellowship to the awardee
- Evidence of their entrepreneurial potential, desire to learn, commercial acumen.

2 – The team or plan for team

- The fit of the team with their assigned roles
- The level of commitment vs reward of the parties
- Expertise/positions that are noticeably absent, and plans to address this
- Level of support from the university/TTO or other organisation.

3 – The engineering

- Level and quality of engineering
- Potential and practicality of the innovation to be delivered at scale
- Readiness for commercialisation.

4 - The IP

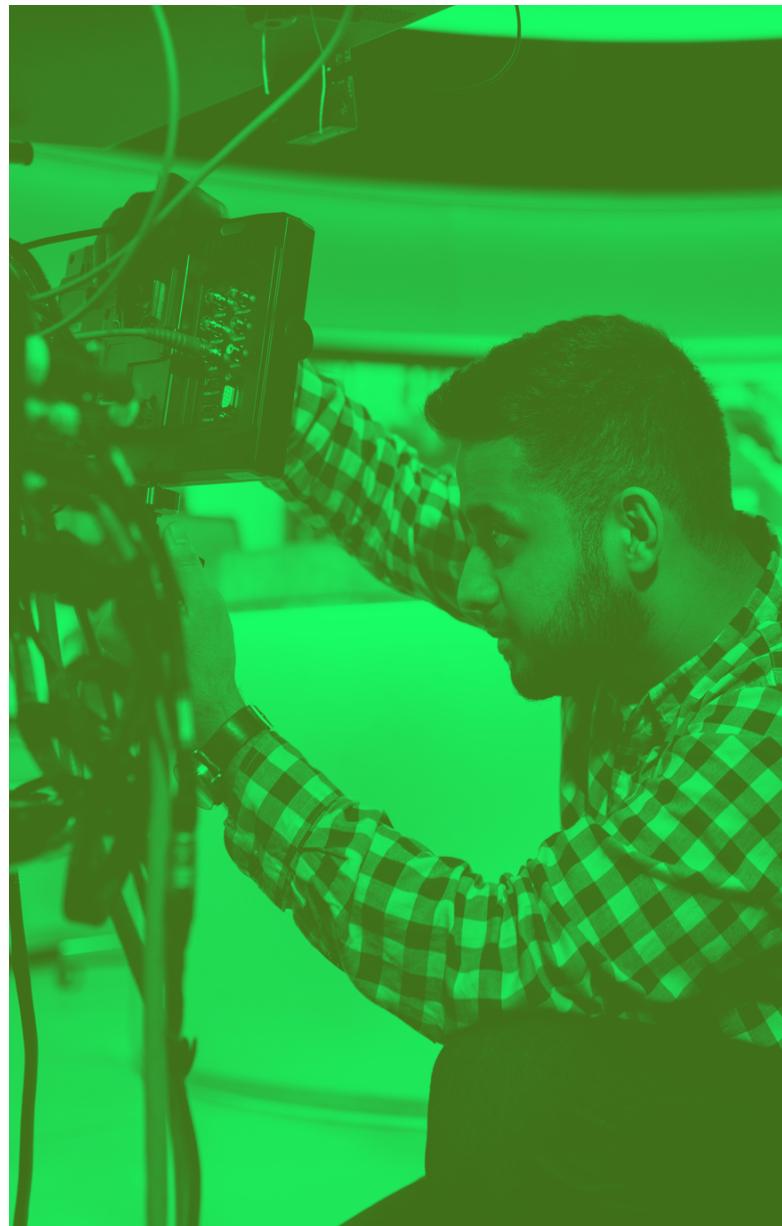
- Level of defensibility of the technology
- Logic of the IP strategy.

5 – The market

- Evidence of market need
- Market size and potential impact of the solution
- Understanding barriers to entry
- Understanding of the route to scaling.

6 – The Go to Market strategy

- Logic of the value chain
- Level of understanding of the ecosystem
- Clarity of USPs
- Evidence of Market readiness
- Feasibility of the business model.





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Endorsements

“I am exceptionally pleased with the RAEEng Enterprise Fellowships. We have successfully raised approximately ~\$4.5 million since participating in the program. I attribute much of this success to the fellowship, which facilitated my transition”.

Dr Pawan Shrestha, Founder of AllFocal

“The Enterprise Fellowship was a pivotal point in my career, it enabled me to work full time as the CEO of my spin-out company METzero Technologies and equipped me with the skills, support and resources to leave my academic role as a Lecturer and dive in fully into entrepreneurship. [...] I developed personally and professionally, secured funding to expand the team and resources to partner with manufacturers and contractors to help us develop our technology to real scale.

Dr Pavlina Theodosiou, Co-Founder of METzero Technologies

“The Enterprise Fellowship has provided me with the necessary support to turn my engineering background into a leading entrepreneurial figure in my start-up”.

Idan Gal-Shohet, Co-Founder of Fibe

About us

The Enterprise Hub

The Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Hub supports the UK's brightest technology and engineering entrepreneurs to realise their potential.

We run three programmes for entrepreneurial engineers at different career stages. Each one offers equity-free funding, an extended programme of mentorship and coaching, and a lifetime of support through connection to an exceptional community of engineers and innovators.

The Enterprise Hub focuses on supporting individuals and fostering their potential in the long term, taking nothing in return. This sets us apart from the usual 'accelerator' model: the Enterprise Hub's programmes last between 6 and 12 months, and all programmes give entrepreneurs lifelong access to an unrivalled community of mentors and alumni.

Our goal is to encourage creativity and innovation in engineering for the benefit of all. By fostering lasting, exceptional connections between talent and expertise, we aim to create a virtuous cycle of innovation that can deliver on this ambition.

The Enterprise Hub was formally launched in April 2013. Since then, we have supported over 600 entrepreneurs and business leaders to start and scale up businesses that can give practical application to their inventions. We've awarded over £19 million in grant funding, and our Hub Members have gone on to raise nearly £3.7 billion in additional funding.

You can follow us on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851

The Graduate Enterprise Fellowships programme is funded through the generous support of the 1851 Royal Commission as part of its wider programme of promoting excellence in science and innovation. The Commission's aim is to 'make a difference' through supporting pure research in science and engineering, applied research in industry, industrial design and many other projects. The Commission is particularly interested in supporting projects involving disruptive innovations from early career entrepreneurs, and welcomes high-risk high reward applications. A representative of the Commission will be involved in the assessment process and interview panel.

Further information can be found here: www.royalcommission1851.org/

The ERA Foundation

The ERA Foundation is delighted to be a partner with The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 in supporting these valuable awards. The ERA Foundation supports the electech manufacturing sector across the UK by supporting engineering, innovation and skills development programmes. Our aim is to ensure the important role that the electech manufacturing sector plays in the UK economy is recognised and our funding support for these awards recognises emerging talent and the next generation of UK engineers. Through this support we aim to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and technical excellence. Further information can be found here: www.erafoundation.org/

Information

Key milestones and information

- **Stage one submission deadline:** 4pm, 16 February 2026 (submit early to have access to stage 2 early)
- **Stage two submission deadline:**
 - Startups - 4pm, 16 March 2026
 - Spinouts - 4pm, 23 March 2026
- **Interview dates:** 26, 27, 28 May 2026
- **Welcome day:** late June 2026
- **Awards commence:** 1 July 2026
- **Mandatory training:** 15 days in the first 6 months
- **Awards end:** 30 June 2027
- **Grant agreement copy**

Assistance

Please see the [website](#) for more information on eligibility, FAQs, and attend an Applicant Support Webinar to receive further advice.

Visa requirements

The Academy cannot take any responsibility for applying for the visas/work permits required and cannot provide advice. Applicants must be able to remain and work legally in the UK for the duration of the fellowship but there is no restriction on applicant nationality.

Successful applicants will be eligible for **fast-track endorsement** under the Global Talent Visa route, if they choose the Academy as the Designated Competent Body to assess for endorsement prior to the Home Office assessment. For more information please contact the Academy's GTv team on globaltalentvisa@raeng.org.uk

Contact the team

If you have any questions about your eligibility, the programme, or problems with your application, please contact the team on:

Enterprisefellowships@raeng.org.uk



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Annex A:

Our grant policies

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 harm. 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. As such all applicants should ensure they are familiar with the Academy's Policy on National Security-Related Risks.

Use of generative AI tools

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

Regarding the use of AI, applicants are fully responsible for all the content presented in their grant applications. The grant process does not penalise the use of generative AI tools, but it is imperative to ensure that the application reflects the applicant's own voice and ideas. It is not acceptable to solely rely on generative AI tools to write the entire grant application from start to finish. While these tools may be used to assist in various aspects, the application must primarily represent the applicant's own work. 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 utilized.

Subsidy Control

The UK subsidy control regime began on 4 January 2023. As part of this regime, the Academy is required to report to the UK Government on how award funding is being used when applications collaborating with commercial enterprises are awarded. The regime determines the lawfulness of monetary awards made using public sector resources when given to businesses and other organisations that are engaged in economic activity. Enterprise Fellowships University Routes i.e. Researchers and International PhD student routes are considered to be Subsidy Schemes and for these a **principles assessment** has been conducted to ensure subsidies issued are compliant with the principles of the Subsidy Control Act.



Research involving human participants or tissue

Research involving human participants is governed by principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, the Nuremberg Code, and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS), all of which set out requirements with regard to the rights and safety of research participants and standards for research design and conduct.

Academy requires researchers to have the relevant regulatory and ethical approvals in place before the relevant research begins, although you may apply for funding before this. In the event of an award being made, commencement of any research involving human participants or tissue will be subject to these approvals being in place and sent to the Academy.

Animals in research

Where the Academy fund research involving the use of animals it maintains that a high regard for animal welfare should be adhered to in all research. Our expectations for any research funded by the Academy mirror those set out by the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) in their documents on Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research and the Non-human primate accommodation, care and use. Applicants are expected to detail how the number of animals to be used was decided, plans to minimise experimental bias, and provide information on statistical aspects of the study including statistical power and appropriate statistical analysis. Applicants must use the NC3Rs Experimental Design Assistant when designing their experiments, and the ARRIVE guidelines for improving the reproducibility and reporting of research involving animals.

Read our grant policies in full [here](#).