

Postdoctoral Research Fellowships 2021

Further Particulars

The Urban Studies Foundation (USF) is pleased to announce a new round of Postdoctoral Research Fellowship funding. In line with the USF's mission to promote high-quality research in Urban Studies, as well as nurturing a new generation of early-career researchers, this round of the scheme will fund up to five fellowships. Each fellowship is worth up to a total of GBP £180,000 over a maximum of three years. Successful candidates may be based anywhere globally, and should propose a programme of work which will advance scholarly knowledge of any element of cities and urbanisation to the highest international standards of peer review.

The scheme is designed to enable Fellows to undertake up to three years dedicated Urban Studies research, following a programme of research designed and executed by the Fellow. The Fellow's research programme is expected to involve original empirical inquiry, methodological rigour and conceptual innovation, all set within a detailed knowledge of relevant existing research and scholarship. The expectation is that a Fellow will publish outputs from this research in the international Urban Studies literature, as well as taking seriously possibilities for developing the impact of their research beyond the academy.

Each fellowship will be held by an eligible applicant for up to a maximum of three years duration, through an award that will be paid to an eligible institute of higher education (HEI) where the fellowship is to be held for the duration of the award. A successful applicant should have a Mentor based in that HEI, with whom they will work closely for the duration of the fellowship.

The deadline for applications to the funding is **1st November 2021**.

All prospective applicants should ensure that they have read this document in detail before contacting the USF to discuss, query or clarify any issues relating to this funding. If the answer to your query cannot be found either below or in the scheme's Frequently Asked Questions, please contact the USF Director of Operations, Joe Shaw, via email: joe.shaw@glasgow.ac.uk

Please note the Frequently Asked Questions document may be updated periodically during the call, if required, and prospective applicants should check the [USF website](#) regularly for such updates. Additionally, please note that some information below may be repeated across different sections for clarity.

This document was last updated: 13th September 2021 (added clarification on research support costs in Section 3)

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1. General terms

The award is worth up to GBP £180,000 in total – up to an absolute maximum of GBP £60,000 per year – and will be paid directly to the host institute of higher education (HEI) in three annual distributions. The HEI should agree an annual salary for the Fellow at an appropriate regional rate (with appropriate ‘on-costs’ also met, i.e. pension, national insurance, etc.) to be paid from these payments, and with an undertaking to use all remaining funds for supporting the research of the Fellow (see below for more detail).

Additionally, the USF makes all offers of funding on the following conditions:

- All outputs from this grant funding must fully and clearly acknowledge USF support as the primary funder of their research. A communications guidelines sheet is provided to awardees along with their offer letter.
- The HEI must accept the offer of funding on the basis of a Memorandum of Agreement between the USF and HEI. More details can be found below in Section 3 below. As part of this agreement, funding can only be provided in GBP (Sterling) currency up to the maximum award value.
- Funding periods are to be strictly adhered to, and written permission must be requested from the USF for any amendments, postponements, extensions, etc. If requests are reasonable they are likely to be accepted, but the USF reserves the right to refuse such requests without providing any reason.
- By applying to this funding, applicants should be prepared to agree to these terms and requirements, including the [USF Code of Practice](#).
- Only one application can be made per person to this award scheme, and Mentors should preferably not support more than one application.

2. Applicant

Please note the following terms of eligibility for applicants to this award:

- An applicant can come from any part of the world and/or be resident/working in any part of the world.
- An applicant must have been awarded a PhD (or equivalent higher degree) in a demonstrably Urban Studies-relevant field of inquiry, with any disciplinary orientation within the broadly conceived social sciences or arts and humanities.
- An applicant must have been awarded that PhD within the past five years of the date upon which their application is received by the Urban Studies Foundation (where date of completion equates with the date of issue of a formal PhD award letter from the relevant HEI). Exceptions to this condition are **only** possible where an applicant can demonstrate a significant period of extenuating circumstances and has sought eligibility guidance on this matter from the USF Director of Operations **prior** to applying (see next bullet point below). Applications will not be accepted from individuals who are finishing/awaiting examination/undertaking corrections of their PhDs. Evidence of PhD award must be uploaded with the application to this award, on the supporting documents page.
- Unless applying directly after the award of their PhD, the expectation is that an applicant must have had formal association as an employee (lecturer, postdoctoral fellow, research assistant, etc.) of one or more HEIs/relevant organisations during the intervening years (e.g. industry, research, policy, etc.). The intention of this scheme is not to offer a route back into academia for someone who has been away from their research field for several years. The USF will however consider applicants who can demonstrate justified career interruptions due to circumstances including unemployment, carer responsibilities, illness, parental leave, a lack of resources, the COVID-19 pandemic, or other extraordinary circumstances. Applicants should seek eligibility guidance on such matters from the USF Director of Operations (contact info above) prior to applying, and should make their reasons for any career interruption clear in their application, using the field provided on the application form to declare and provide evidence for extenuating circumstances (see section on ‘Applicant information’). Where relevant, evidence to support any declaration should be uploaded with this section of the form. If an applicant does not seek clarification on such matters before applying then the USF cannot guarantee that their application will be reviewed.
- As indicated, the applicant must demonstrably be an Urban Studies scholar, and the onus will be on applicants to demonstrate that their research fits the description of being relevant to Urban Studies. It will not be sufficient for an applicant simply to state that their research is based in urban areas: it will have to be substantially concerned with dynamics/processes

(environmental, demographic, economic, political, social, cultural, historical, etc.) that in one way or another serve to shape and change the urban.

- Even if applying directly after the award of their PhD, the expectation is that an applicant will already have some profile in Urban Studies research – more developed with greater time period since the award of their PhD – and applicants should expect to provide evidence of relevant achievements (publications, grant awards, presentations, prizes, etc.).
- Contact details must be provided for two academic referees who can be contacted in support of your application. Both referees should be prepared to submit letters of recommendation if contacted by the USF, and institutional email addresses should be provided where possible for each referee. Referees should be suitably senior supervisors, mentors or colleagues of the applicant (e.g. supervisors, department heads, line managers, PhD examiners, etc.) who can comment on the applicant's suitability and qualification for the fellowship, and at least one referee should be the applicant's PhD supervisor. The named Mentor may not act as a referee. USF Trustees should not be named as referees unless they were also the primary PhD supervisor for the applicant, and in this case permission should be sought from the USF Director of Operations beforehand (as per USF Code of Practice, see contact details above). Referees are only likely to be contacted in the event that an applicant is shortlisted, but should be prepared to send their letters of recommendation directly to the USF by the specified deadline. Failure of referees to send references on time will mean that an application cannot be considered.
- It is not necessary to list pre-undergraduate level education on the application form (i.e. pre-bachelors). Nor should applicants list more than three current and three previous roles on the form. Any additional relevant information on education, employment and/or voluntary positions may be included on the applicant CV if desired (see 'Supporting Documents' requirements below).

3. Host institution, mentor, and funding

The HEI where a fellowship is to be hosted must be one with a recognised base in Urban Studies research, but in principle it can be located anywhere in the world. This should be the same HEI throughout the duration of the fellowship. The HEI should typically be a public university, but other research institutions are eligible provided that they are non-profit, publicly-accountable, dedicated to scientific research, and able and willing to support the Fellowship.

The contractual agreement will be between the USF and the HEI, not between the USF and the Fellow, and the USF cannot undertake to intervene in salary or other negotiations between the HEI and the Fellow. As a charitable foundation, it should be underlined that the USF does not pay ‘full economic costs’ (FECs), but is providing an award that is likely to be higher than the agreed basic salary of the Fellow.

Nonetheless, in the event of a Fellow having strong grounds for complaining about the conduct of the HEI, the USF would reserve the right to withdraw the award (with a month’s notice). The same would apply were the HEI to have a serious complaint about the conduct of the Fellow.

The HEI must undertake to meet the expenses of the fellowship – e.g. for field research, conference attendance, publication costs, etc. – as well as the Fellow’s salary. Should these expenses lead the overall cost of the fellowship to exceed £60,000 per year, then it is the responsibility of the HEI, not the USF, to meet such additional costs. There is no scope for HEIs to request additional funding from the USF.

Additional research support costs (including but not limited to budget items like travel, equipment, assistance, etc.), if justified and reasonable, can be detailed in the HEI support form under section 3.2 (the field following the statement of the gross annual salary). These may be drawn either from the total maximum value of the USF award (if there are remaining funds above the gross annual salary), or in-kind from the HEI, or from both.

The USF expects Fellows should establish living costs at their host institution's location relative to the wage they will receive (after consideration of other legally required on-costs etc.). The USF also encourages fellows to identify and consider the HEI-specific and/or locally-specific provisions for other additional costs, including but not limited to maternity and carer's leave entitlements, prior to choosing an institution, and may contact the USF Director of Operations confidentially to discuss any concerns they might have.

The anticipation is therefore that the Fellow will have sought a host HEI, and will have entered into detailed negotiations about precisely what arrangements the HEI will put in place to support the fellowship – office space, access to facilities, membership of research clusters, etc. – and, more

specifically, will have developed a relationship with an identified Mentor (a senior staff member) who will undertake such a role for the duration of the fellowship. The Mentor should be an established scholar with a strong track record of international research excellence in Urban Studies, and there should be a substantial ‘fit’ between his/her research interests and those of the applicant.

Applicants must indicate the start-dates and duration of the fellowship on the application form, as well as providing the relevant contact details for the HEI and Mentor. The gross annual salary indicated on the application form should match exactly the figure provided on the HEI support form.

Fellowships may be proposed on a part-time basis provided there is good justification for this, and that the total duration of the fellowship does not exceed three years and the maximum annual funding total as indicated above.

Applicants must submit a support form completed and signed by the Mentor and a representative of the HEI on the supporting documents section of the application form. The applicant should arrange completion of each form with the Mentor and HEI, and the author of the HEI support form should be contactable by the USF. The author of the HEI support form must hold a role where they are clearly authorised to outline such support on behalf of the HEI (e.g. research directors, finance administrators, sponsored projects administrators, heads of department, etc.).

Mentors should ensure that they have consulted the Mentorship Best Practice Guidelines available on the [USF website](#), and the support form should be completed in a manner that clearly communicates the Mentor’s commitment to supporting the Fellow’s programme of research.

The HEI support form should clearly outline the gross annual salary that will be payable to the Fellow, and any additional support that will be provided during the duration of the award. Additional support might include allocation of funding to research support costs, details of health insurance and other benefits (with reference to the local/national context within which the HEI is based), and any in-kind support / HEI resources that the Fellow will be able to draw upon.

The Mentor and HEI support forms can be downloaded on the [USF website](#).

4. Programme of research

It is essential that the programme of research is clear from the application in all of its proposed aspects, and that this programme is demonstrably embedded within the broad trans-disciplinary frame of Urban Studies (see point 5 in Section 2 above). This should be communicated clearly and succinctly in the application (in application form section ‘Programme of research’).

Here applicants should first make a brief statement of their intended contribution and commitment to Urban Studies research and scholarship (maximum 250 words).

Applicants are encouraged to be ambitious in specifying the scope and/or scale of the programme, and in terms of the kinds of contributions envisaged (both to the academy and potentially to beneficiaries, collaborators, and audiences beyond the academy). Applicants should use the free field in the application form to give as strong a sense as possible of this ambition and proposed contribution. Applicants may consider the suggested content below for this field (“Statement of your proposed programme of Urban Studies research”) to guide how they present their programme, but exactly how an applicant chooses to balance their commentary should be entirely their choice.

Suggested content may include:

- key objective(s) and question(s) of the programme of research;
- relating these to the state of the art in the literature, and explaining your methods;
- explaining why the research programme is innovative, detailing the ground-breaking elements;
- describing the envisaged academic outputs;
- addressing knowledge utilisation/mobilisation, and ethical issues (if any).

Applicants may use up to 2,750 words maximum for this programme statement, and no formatting is permitted in the text field (i.e. no bold/italic text etc.). A separate section is provided for bibliography / references used in the research programme field, maximum 750 words.

The USF accepts that a successful applicant’s programme of research may change somewhat during the three years of the fellowship, reflecting fieldwork practicalities, other research or impact opportunities that arise, new conceptual-methodological challenges becoming apparent during this period, etc. Crucially, though, all such changes should be negotiated with the USF, the broader intention being that the USF will be an active (but never directive) presence throughout an individual’s fellowship.

The proposed programme should normally specify original empirical inquiry, methodological rigour and conceptual innovation, all set within a detailed knowledge of relevant existing research and scholarship. The programme should be ambitious but plausible, and should rest on clear foundations established through the applicant's scholarly and research work to date (at PhD and maybe post-PhD level). It is acknowledged that Fellows will likely already have commitments to further research directions, publishing and networking, and such ongoing commitments should be factored into the proposed programme (or at least acknowledged as part of the applicant's academic context).

Whilst the application and proposed programme of research must be completed in English, it is recognised that applicants in some parts of the world may not be working primarily in English, and may intend to publish outputs from their research in other languages.

5. Supporting documents

All applications must contain the following supporting documents, uploaded on the last page of the application (each document must be a single pdf file, maximum size 5mb):

- Applicant CV, maximum three pages, clearly listing academic achievements and publications in the area of urban studies.
- Proof of PhD award (e.g. award letter or some equivalent document that can confirm the veracity and date of the applicant's PhD award).
- A completed and signed mentor support form.
- A completed and signed HEI support form.

Optionally, applicants may also upload the following documents (each document must be a single pdf file, maximum size 5mb):

- Any evidence to support a declaration of extenuating circumstances (see section on 'Applicant information').
- If required, any supplemental non-text material (e.g. diagrams, images, tables, etc.) to support the research programme statement may also be uploaded on the final page. Supplementary documents must not contain significant additional proposal text, and this may be discarded at the discretion of the awarding panel.

6. Assessment process and evaluation

6.1. Process and timeline

The completed applications will be subject to a preliminary assessment, and those that are incomplete or from applicants/mentors/HEIs deemed ineligible or inappropriate will be discarded (and these applicants will be informed by e-mail of this outcome). Eligible applications will then be subjected to critical review by Trustees of the USF, if necessary with assistance from invited external assessors (senior Urban Studies scholars with relevant expertise). It may be that the USF will request further clarification or information from applicants, Mentors and/or HEIs.

Review and assessment of the applications is based on a combination of criteria including the (a) track record of the applicant, (b) innovation and quality of the proposed work, and (c) strength or fit of applicant and research with the proposed Mentor and/or HEI.

Following review, a shortlist of applicants will be agreed in early November 2021. Referees will then be contacted for letters of recommendation, which they must provide by the end of November 2021. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited for an interview via Skype or Zoom. The anticipation is that these interviews will be held in early December 2021, and that the successful applicant(s) will be informed as soon as possible thereafter. The USF will endeavour to inform all applicants of an outcome within eight weeks of the deadline, but naturally this also depends upon the popularity of the call. The decisions made by the USF must be regarded as final, and the USF is not prepared to enter into discussions about these decisions (for more information, please see the USF Code of Practice available on the [USF website](#)).

Successful applicant(s) will typically be expected to accept or reject the offer of a fellowship within 14 days of the offer being sent out. A formal contract will then be drawn up between the USF and the HEI, with the expectation that the funded period of the fellowship should commence by September 2022. Should the fellowship not be commenced by September 2022, the USF would reserve the right to withdraw the award. There will be a requirement of successful applicants (the Fellows) to make Annual and Final reports to be sent to the USF by specified deadlines, and to respond, where possible, to any other requests for information or participation from the USF. Each report should also be completed by the Mentor, and the final ending report must include a statement of expenditure from the HEI. Unspent funds remaining at the end of the award must be returned to the USF.

6.2. Factors of success and candidate profile

Please note that the success rate in the last round of this award (2019) was less than five percent, with a total of 117 applications to the scheme for five awards. Many high-quality candidates with

very strong applications were therefore regrettably unsuccessful, and there is reason to believe subsequent rounds of this funding will also be highly competitive. Whilst the novelty and quality of the research proposal is the most important aspect of an application, prospective applicants should also be aware that their own existing research profile (CV, publications, etc.) is also an important consideration in the assessment of applications.

Therefore, with regards to this aspect of assessment, the USF would like to disclose that no short-listed candidate in 2019 had published less than three peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters at the time of application to the 2019 round of the scheme (this does not include forthcoming publications, or other types of publication). The median number of peer-reviewed publications authored by short-listed candidates was nine, roughly split between journal articles and book chapters. Additionally, of the top-forty ranked candidates overall, none had published less than two peer-reviewed articles or book chapters and the median number of publications was six.

All prospective applicants should therefore be aware that because applicant profile is one of several key criteria for assessment, that having less than two or three high-quality peer-reviewed publications *may* put them at a significant disadvantage compared to other candidates. Applicants should therefore consider their chances of success carefully before making the effort to apply. In many cases, those with otherwise strong proposals might be better off focusing on their publication track-record and other opportunities in the first instance, and then (if eligible) applying to the scheme in subsequent years. This is however only a disclosure of trends for the 2019 scheme, and each candidate is always carefully assessed based on the full range of criteria detailed within this document. *The 2021 call may have an entirely different average candidate profile, and the USF would like to stress that excellence can also be shown in other ways than publications.*

Additionally, the USF does welcome applications from urban scholars around the world. And, as part of a commitment to equal opportunities and regional diversity, a candidate's regional background (in terms of their career profile; where their PhD was awarded; where they are currently based; which HEI they are applying to; and what value the funding might represent) will also be taken into consideration as a secondary factor when assessing their academic profile and proposed HEI. Therefore, whilst the primary criteria for each successful proposal will be excellence across all criteria outlined above in Section 6.1, in cases where applicants are otherwise considered as broadly equal, the awarding panel takes the view that some Global South candidates may have experienced less advantages in their career to date than those from the North. The panel will therefore be sensitive to such regional inequalities during the shortlisting process (where Global South is broadly defined according to the OECD list of ODA recipients), including differences in salaries, welfare, and research support that may arise due to economic inequalities and variations across different regions. If any applicant believes that either their regional or personal circumstances should be factored into account in this manner, then they should add a short statement explaining any extenuating circumstances for consideration by the panel. This includes any significant career

breaks since the award of their PhD, as outlined in Section 2. Documented evidence may also be uploaded to support this statement, if relevant.

7. Application submission

Applications must be completed by the individual applying for the fellowship, but it is expected that they will have worked closely on this application with staff, and particularly the Mentor, from the proposed host HEI (both Mentor and a HEI representative must complete and sign the two support forms required).

Please note that each applicant can only submit one application per round of this scheme, and Mentors should preferably not support more than one application.

Completed applications must be submitted online, via web form, no later than **1st November 2021**. Extensions to this deadline cannot be granted under any circumstances.

All fields should be considered mandatory unless clearly stated as 'optional', and incomplete applications will not be considered. All applications must be completed in English language.

Please note that this application form is several pages long. Each page has a save button at the bottom of the page, to enable progress to be saved. However, it is strongly recommended to draft proposals offline (e.g. in word), and then paste details into the fields provided. Proposal text formatting is not permitted (i.e. no colours, bold, or italic text). To assist with this, a template form is available to [download](#) and use offline before submitting this form.

Only one pdf format attachment is allowed per upload field, and each pdf attachment should not exceed 5mb in size.

In addition, all applicants will be requested to voluntarily complete an anonymous **Equality & Diversity Monitoring Form** after they have submitted their application. This form and any information volunteered with it is **not** used in the assessment process and will be separated from individual applications. It is only used for monitoring who applies to USF awards on aggregate, so that the USF may regularly assess and improve how it advertises and administers its grant funding. The USF therefore encourages all applicants to complete this survey.