

Access Mentoring Applicant Guidance

RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships 2026

Deadline: 13 October 2026, 5pm GMT

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Introduction to the Academy

The [Royal Academy of Engineering](https://raeng.org.uk/about-us/)¹ is a charity delivering public benefit, a National Academy providing progressive leadership, and a Fellowship bringing together an unrivalled community of leaders from every part of engineering and technology. Our Patron is His Majesty King Charles III.

The Academy's Strategy 2030, "[Engineering Better Lives](https://raeng.org.uk/about-us/our-strategy/)"², sets out a vision to unite a community of outstanding experts and innovators in engineering to drive positive societal impact. The strategy is built around three core goals: a sustainable and innovative economy, technology improving lives, and an engineering community fit for the future. The Academy's grant programmes support these strategic goals by investing in people, partnerships, and projects that advance engineering excellence, foster inclusion and diversity, and deliver meaningful societal impact in alignment with the Academy's vision and values.

Aim of Access Mentoring

To provide additional support to applicants from groups that are persistently underrepresented within UK engineering through the grant application process. This [positive action](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/159)³ will contribute to improving diversity in the talent pipeline and widening the diversity of applicants and awardees within the Academy's research grant schemes.

The process will be run in the 2026/27 [RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships](https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/)⁴ call (Tuesday 3 November 2026 deadline).

- **Access Mentoring should not be used by universities as a mechanism to influence internal selection or shortlisting processes.**
- **Candidates who undertake Access Mentoring are expected to submit a full application to the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship scheme.**

¹ <https://raeng.org.uk/about-us/>

² <https://raeng.org.uk/about-us/our-strategy/>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/159>

⁴ <https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/>

RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships overview

The Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) /Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship scheme allows early- to mid-career academics to concentrate on research.

The Fellowship covers a maximum of £65,000 for the salary costs of a replacement academic who will cover the Awardee's teaching and administrative duties for up to one year. This provides engineering academics with an opportunity to reinvigorate their research careers, enhance their current research interests or initiate new lines of research without teaching or administrative constraints.

The Fellowship also provides a support fund of up to £5,000 for miscellaneous research costs incurred by the awardee, including conference attendance and public engagement activities.

These Fellowships are funded by [The Leverhulme Trust](#)⁵.

Eligibility

Applicants will need to meet the following criteria to qualify for Access Mentoring:

1. Meet the eligibility criteria for the [RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships](#)⁶.
2. To be from an underrepresented group in engineering, specifically:
 - **Women**
 - **Black people (including any mixed ethnicity groups that include Black ethnic backgrounds)**
 - **Disabled people**

⁵ <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/>

⁶ <https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/>

The Academy accepts applicants' self-declaration on the above identified underrepresented groups.

All candidates, including those from the identified underrepresented groups, must meet the assessment criteria for the RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship scheme, detailed in the [applicant guidance notes](#)⁷.

Eligible applicants are not obligated to undertake Access Mentoring.

Reasonable adjustments

We want to ensure all applicants can participate and present their best selves during the application process, and for the duration of the award if you are successful.

If you need any adjustments or changes to support your participation in the process or throughout the programme, please contact Olivia Saunders (Programme Manager) by telephone (+44 207 167 8149) or email (Olivia.Saunders@raeng.org.uk) to discuss your needs.

All information shared will be treated confidentially in line with GDPR principles. For more details, please see the Academy's [privacy policy](#)⁸.

We encourage you to **get in touch at least 10 working days before the submission deadline**, so we can respond accordingly and tailor possible adjustments to your circumstances.

⁷ <https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/how-to-apply/>

⁸ <https://raeng.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

Common errors in RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship applications

- Failure to demonstrate a significant teaching and administrative workload or need for relief from those duties.
- Poorly defined research objectives that are too broad, lacking direction or not clearly aligned with the aims of the scheme.
- Lack of novelty in research or failure to articulate how the proposed work will address a novel research question.
- Unclear or unconvincing explanation of ambition, vision or potential for impact.
- Failure to identify potential risks, plan mitigations or indicate knowledge of competitors.
- Unrealistic details such as overstating the potential for impact or whether the milestones are feasible within the available time, budget and resources.
- A weak letter of support from the host institution.
- Lack of strong, well-documented partnerships and letters of support or a vague plan for collaboration that would be necessary for success.
- Inconsistent or unclear information provided in the application form.

Mentors

Access Mentors will be Fellows of the Academy or alumni of the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship scheme who have volunteered their time to provide Access Mentoring support.

- **PARTICIPATION IN ACCESS MENTORING DOES NOT GUARANTEE THE APPLICATION WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.**

Mentor/mentee pairing

- Mentees will be matched with a mentor on a first come, first-served basis.
- Mentees will be matched with a mentor at the Academy's discretion.
- Mentor and mentees will not be matched based on research discipline or any other criteria.
- Mentees will be matched with a mentor up to the capacity of the mentors.
- Mentors will be from a different institution to the applicant.
- A mentor may have multiple mentees.

Mentor role

Access Mentors will provide the applicant with advice in producing a high-quality application aligned to expectations of the scheme. The applicant is not obligated to follow the Access Mentor's advice and should use their judgement and act accordingly in their best interest and that of their proposal.

The mentor is not responsible for the outcome of the application. Mentors will not review their mentees application in the scheme review period.

An Access Mentor does:

- Read the application and suggest areas of improvement
- Listen and give their time
- Support, encourage and challenge
- Provide a framework to look at options, to understand implications and to plan future action
- Share experiences where relevant
- Signpost, if asked, information and resources – including people/networks.

An Access Mentor does not:

- Collaborate on research
- Apply jointly for grant funding
- Get involved in matters relating to status, promotion, or payments
- Directly act on behalf of a mentee
- Judge the actions the mentee takes.

Format

Applicants will meet with their allocated mentor for a 1-2-1, one-hour meeting (approximately) at their mutual convenience. Mentors will receive a draft copy of the application in advance of the meeting. Applicants should ensure that the proposal is at a sufficient level of maturity to maximise their time at their mentor meeting.

The RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships scheme deadline is 3 November 2026. The mentor meeting will take place no later than 27 October 2026 (one week before the scheme deadline).

Meetings will be held virtually. If both the mentor and mentee agree, meetings may be held physically. Any subsequent meetings are at the discretion of the mentor and the mentee.

Once the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship application has been submitted the Access Mentoring relationship officially ends.

Once the application has been submitted the mentor will not provide any further advice or support on the application.

The Academy and mentor are not liable for the information that is disclosed by the mentee.

Application limit

There is no limit on the number of Access Mentoring applications an institution can submit for the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship scheme providing the candidate meets the eligibility criteria and submits a full application to the grant scheme.

PLEASE NOTE: Access Mentoring is a resource limited opportunity. Applicants do not need to wait until the deadline to submit their application and can be matched with a mentor as soon as the application is approved. Early submission is encouraged.

Equity, diversity and 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](#)⁹ 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, sex, or sexual orientation.

Before you commence your application, you will be asked a few diversity monitoring questions to help the Academy monitor and assess our diversity and inclusion policy. It will only be used for statistical purposes with access restricted to staff involved in processing and monitoring the data. No information will be published or used in any way that identifies individuals. The Academy will retain personal information as per our [Data Retention Policy](#)¹⁰ in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

The information will be treated as strictly confidential, nonattributable and will not be seen by anyone involved in any selection processes. You will need to complete the diversity monitoring section before you can submit the grant application form, but can choose “prefer not to say” as responses.

- **ACCESS MENTORING IS CONFIDENTIAL.**
- **ALL CANDIDATES ARE TREATED EQUALLY.**
- **CANDIDATES WHO RECEIVE ACCESS MENTORING ARE NOT DISCLOSED TO THE REVIEW PANEL.**

⁹ <https://raeng.org.uk/media/flghp4gn/rae005-diversity-and-inclusion-policy-2024.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://raeng.org.uk/media/duhijwap2/raeng-privacy-policy-grant-or-award.pdf>

How to apply

Access Mentoring applications are to be submitted via the Academy's [grant management system](#)¹¹.

The Access Mentoring application process is separate to that of the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship. Applicants should ensure they adhere to the RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship application guidance.

The Access Mentoring application **deadline is 5pm on Tuesday 13 October 2026**. This is subject to capacity of mentors being reached and may close sooner.

Completing the application form

After logging into the grants management system and selecting 'Access Mentoring - The RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships' in the 'Start Application' section, you should be presented with the 'Instructions' screen.

Here you will see some general instructions on how to use the system, as well as links to each of the three sections of the application form listed below:

1. Applicant and host institution details
2. Project details
3. Declaration

You can save your work at any stage in the application process and return to it later. You can answer the questions in any order you like, so you can freely skip some sections and return to them later.

¹¹ <https://grants.raeng.org.uk/applications.aspx>

Section 1: Applicant details

1.1 Applicant name and contact details

Please confirm your name and preferred contact details. Some of your details and those of your institution should be automatically generated by the system, as you provided these at registration. Please ensure that the contact email address is correct and will be valid for the entire entirety of the application process as this will be the main method of communication regarding the application.

You should also provide the details of the host institution where the RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship will be held and confirm that this is the 'host organisation'.

1.2 RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship eligibility

Applicants will need to meet the eligibility criteria for the RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship.

Please confirm that you have understood and met the eligibility criteria by stating your RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship application reference number. The application reference number will be in the format of **LTRF-2627-23-xxx**.

1.3 Access mentoring eligibility

To be eligible for Access Mentoring support, applicants must confirm they are from an underrepresented group in engineering, specifically:

- **Women**
- **Black people (including those with any mixed ethnicity with Black ethnic backgrounds)**
- **Disabled people.**

1.4 Mentoring

What are the key attributes you would look for in a mentor and how do you think they would be able to help you? What specific areas would you like advice on?

(100 words maximum)

Section 2: Project details

2.1 Please provide a title for your proposal

The essence of the research should be captured in the title and should be as informative as possible. Please ensure that it is understandable to a non-specialist reader and does not contain any confidential or sensitive information.

(15 words maximum)

2.2 Please provide a summary of your proposal

Please provide a summary of the proposed activity, including key goals and expected impact. Your summary should be understandable to the non-specialist reader.

We may make this summary publicly available if successful, so please do not include any confidential or sensitive information.

(250 words maximum)

2.3 Select one single broad engineering category that best aligns with your proposal

If your research proposal fits into several categories, please pick the category that is most applicable to your proposal. The category selected will be used to help identify reviewers and panel members.

Details of the engineering categories can be found in Appendix A of the [RAEng/Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship guidance notes](https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/how-to-apply/)¹² and are also available under the '[List of Panels](https://www.raeng.org.uk/about-us/fellowship/election-to-the-fellowship)' on our website¹³.

2.4 Please provide a maximum of 10 keywords that describe your proposal

The keywords provided help the Academy identify suitable reviewers.

(10 words maximum, separated by a comma)

¹² <https://raeng.org.uk/programmes-and-prizes/programmes/uk-grants-and-prizes/support-for-research/raeng-leverhulme-trust-research-fellowships/how-to-apply/>

¹³ <https://www.raeng.org.uk/about-us/fellowship/election-to-the-fellowship>

Section 3: Declaration

I confirm here and by submitting this application that:

- I have read and accept the application guidance and other information regarding this scheme, which is provided on the website of the Royal Academy of Engineering (the Academy)
- All the information submitted herein is wholly accurate at the time of submission, and I will update the Academy of any material changes which may affect the application
- I meet the eligibility criteria for the Academy's Access Mentoring scheme
- I meet the eligibility criteria for the Academy's RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships scheme
- I will submit a full application to the Academy's RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships scheme
- I have the express permission of any individuals whose contact details I have shared as part of this application process, to share these details with the Academy.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that the Academy may disclose the information contained within this application to external parties for the purpose of assessing the application.

3.1 Applicant declaration

Please tick the checkbox once you have read and understood the declaration included in the application form.

3.2 How did you hear about this scheme? (optional question, not visible to reviewers)

This question is optional but selecting the primary source from the list provided will help the Academy to understand which marketing materials are most successful at reaching the academic community to improve future communications work.

3.3 Please select this box if you are happy to receive emails from The Royal Academy of Engineering regarding future funding opportunities (optional question, not visible to reviewers)

Please tick the checkbox if you consent to receiving emails from the Academy regarding funding opportunities.

Submitting the application

A grey '**submit application**' button will become available once the application form is completed. **Please note that once submitted the application cannot be edited and updated**, but you may view it from your account on the grants management system.

We aim to acknowledge applications within one week of submission.

Timeline

Milestone	Date
Access Mentoring call opens	4 August 2026
RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship call opens	4 August 2026
Access Mentoring application deadline. (This is subject to capacity of mentors being reached and may close sooner)	5pm, 13 October 2026
Mentor-mentee pairing	August - November 2026
1-2-1 meetings	Before 27 October 2026
RAEng / Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship call deadline	5pm, 3 November 2026

Feedback

On completion of the Access Mentoring process, applicants will be asked for feedback via a survey on the Access Mentoring process so it can continue to be refined and tailored to be of most value.

For all queries, please contact the Research Team at research@raeng.org.uk.