



National Trust/British Library Doctoral Fellowships

Application Guidelines 2026/27



About the National Trust

With more than five million members, the National Trust is one of the largest heritage organisations in Europe. The charity manages 350 historic buildings, a collection of over one million objects and a portfolio of landscapes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our purpose is to care for these places ‘for everyone, for ever’.

The National Trust’s Strategy, [People and Nature Thriving](#), sets out the organisation’s ambition to meet the needs of an environment under pressure, and the challenges and expectations of a fast-moving world. Underpinning this is a renewed commitment to diversity and inclusion to create a fair, equal society, free from discrimination.

About the British Library

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom. It gives access to the world’s most comprehensive research collection with artefacts from every age of written civilisation, supports traditional and digital scholarship and engages researchers and the public through online resources, events and exhibitions.

The Library’s purpose and vision are explained in [Knowledge Matters: The British Library 2023-2030](#) as well as in the [British Library Research Strategy 2024 –2030](#).

The National Trust/British Library Doctoral Fellowships

The Fellowships are part of an ongoing partnership between the National Trust and the British Library, which aims to develop collaborative research that mutually benefits each organisation and their audiences.

Simultaneously, the Fellowships aim to support the demand for postgraduate training and development in the UK. The National Trust and the British Library both have Independent Research Organisation status from UKRI, making them ideal environments for PhD students to experience research in new contexts, engage with different audiences, gain insights into career paths outside Higher Education, build professional networks and participate in the activities of major cultural organisations.

The Fellowships offer the opportunity to work on a project in a specific area under the supervision of experts from both organisations. Following an initial induction, fellowships will involve independent research and require the ability to work autonomously, supported by regular meetings with the supervisors, towards an agreed set of objectives.

Students do not have to apply for a project that is directly related to their own PhD and will be encouraged to refine, adapt or extend project tasks and outcomes in line with their own interests, expertise or development needs.

Projects offer an opportunity to experience practice-based research and contribute to the work of each organisation tangibly and in a variety of ways. Projects may, for example:

- enhance the accessibility and understanding of collections, their history and context;
- support large-scale data analytics and digital scholarship;
- contribute to the organisations' public engagement programmes;
- produce new research insights, teaching and learning resources and online content.

Training and development

Fellowship students are welcome to access a range of workshops, talks and training available to National Trust and British Library staff. Supervisors will be able to offer advice on which opportunities may be of particular interest. Examples of training opportunities at the National Trust include weekly curatorial seminars and an annual PhD networking event. Examples of training opportunities at the British Library include the Research Packed Lunch series, PhD Staff Talks series, PhD writing retreats, Digital Scholarship Training Programme, Open and Engaged Programme or Business & IP Centre workshops and events.

Any specific training required to undertake the fellowship will be provided, and details of this is provided in the individual project profiles.

Applicant eligibility

- Applications to National Trust/British Library Fellowships are welcome from all current PhD students who have the right to study in the UK and who have not yet undertaken a funded research placement. If you are not a current PhD student with the right to study in the UK, then unfortunately you are not eligible for this scheme.
- National Trust/British Library Fellowships are an equal opportunities scheme and especially welcome applications from PhD students with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- Fellowship candidates must have the support of their academic supervisor when applying.

Funding

The Fellowship scheme will provide the successful candidate with a bursary equivalent to the current UKRI doctoral stipend, pro rata for 3 months, plus reasonable expenses directly incurred for project activities.

Duration, location and arrangements

Fellowships are offered for 3 months full time or 6 months part time. The National Trust Sound Archive fellowship will begin in September 2026 or as soon as possible after.

Fellowships will involve on-site research at British Library and National Trust sites, and some tasks may be undertaken remotely. Further details are provided in the individual fellowship profile.

Any remote working arrangements will be discussed between the successful applicant and the fellowship supervisor. If remote working is agreed, the student will be required to ensure that they have access to the necessary technical equipment (e.g. laptop/PC, internet access) to successfully and safely undertake the agreed fellowship tasks. When working on site at the National Trust or the British Library, all necessary equipment will be provided.

Selection criteria and process

All applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Clear reasons for applying for the selected project, and an understanding of the fellowship context

2. Project-specific skills as detailed in the individual fellowship profile
3. Ability to work independently and with others
4. Excellent written and verbal communication skills
5. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications and online meeting tools

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview in mid-June.

All interviewed applicants will be notified of the outcome. For successful candidates, fellowship offers will be subject to the British Library and National Trust's security clearance processes.

To apply, send a completed application form to oralhistory@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Contact for enquiries

If you have any questions about the National Trust/British Library Doctoral Fellowships, please email Research.Development@bl.uk, copying in research@nationaltrust.org.uk. If you have any specific questions about the currently advertised opportunity, please contact oralhistory@nationaltrust.org.uk. Please note that enquiries may be passed on to relevant colleagues at either the National Trust or British Library to respond.