

## Centre for National Training and Research Excellence in Understanding Behaviour (Centre-UB)

### Early Career Researcher Fellowship Programme 2026

The Centre for National Training and Research Excellence in Understanding Behaviour ([Centre-UB](#)) is pleased to announce a call for applications for early career researcher fellows. [Centre-UB](#) is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Our early career fellows are an essential part of our mission to develop the next generation of behavioural researchers who are skilled at translating research into real-world benefit and collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders. We will support their development by providing a training environment characterised by excellent science, cutting edge methods, interdisciplinarity, and translation through our critical mass of world-leading and internationally excellent research conducted by our behavioural researchers. Throughout their fellowship, early career fellows will work closely with a non-academic partner organisation. Through co-development and mentoring, our partners will help our fellows to gain vital experience of developing and applying behavioural research outside of academic settings.

Centre-UB early career researcher fellows will develop their fellowship activities together with mentors from the University of Birmingham and a non-academic partner organisation. Throughout the fellowship, mentors from both the University of Birmingham and the partner organisation will support the development of the early career researcher fellow to achieve the aims of their fellowship.

This document outlines the aims and objective of the fellowship programme and the application process.

There is a 2-stage application process:

1. Deadline for Expression of Interest is **4pm March 26 2026**
2. Deadline for full application is **4pm May 6 2026**

### 1. Aims and Objectives of Early Career Researcher Fellowship Programme

Centre-UB will recruit three cohorts of 8 early career researcher fellows into the centre to advance their training in behavioural research. The fellows will be part of the University of Birmingham and will be mentored by both the University of Birmingham and the partner organisation. Throughout their fellowship, early career researcher fellows will work together with the University of Birmingham and partner organisations to continue their **development as a behavioural researcher**, capitalise the knowledge exchange and impact of **their behavioural research**, and/or conduct **further behavioural research**, as well as promote a **positive research culture** and a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Centre-UB behavioural research innovation and excellence is focussed around understanding behaviour. Key to Centre-UB is that subject matter expertise is not siloed within individual research disciplines; instead, early career researcher fellows are encouraged to work with colleagues from other disciplines. Interdisciplinary projects are highly encouraged, but the majority of the fellowship

should be within social sciences (at least 50%). Each Centre-UB fellowship should also fit within the [ESRC remit](#).

To achieve the aims and objectives of the early career researcher fellowship programme, fellowships are expected to contain the following components:

**1. Development as behavioural researcher – at least 25% of the fellowship**

*Example activities are training workshops (e.g., at the University of Birmingham, the partner organisation), networking events, training visits to (international) partners, development of grant applications for further research.*

The remaining activities of the fellowship can include the following activities – either in isolation or in combination:

**2. Translation of behavioural research to knowledge exchange and impact – no more than 75% of fellowship**

*Example activities are development of policy briefings, development and implementation of dissemination materials (e.g., toolkit, website, support programmes), assessment of effectiveness of dissemination materials developed based on their behavioural research. This can be based on their own previous research or research conducted with or by the partner organisation.*

**3. Conducting further behavioural research – no more than 50% of fellowship**

*Example activities are completing a new project with the partner to learn how behavioural research is used in their organisation, collecting data to support the development of knowledge exchange and impact activities, collecting pilot data to support grant applications. Please note that if the fellowship does not specifically include a component of translation of behavioural research to knowledge exchange and impact, the potential pathways to impact will need to be described in the application. In this case, the generation of impact through these pathways is outside the scope of the fellowship.*

The components of the fellowship are interdependent and should be embedded in a coherent way across the fellowship, and the activities should be underpinned by the fellow's career aspirations.

Each research fellow will have a mentor from the University of Birmingham and a mentor from the non-academic partner organisation. Each fellowship will be co-developed with the partner organisation, building on the research expertise of the early career researcher fellow as well as the expertise of the University of Birmingham and partner organisation mentors. Fellowship activities should support the development of the early career fellow in achieving the aims of the fellowship and be in line with the fellow's longer-term career aspiration. Partner organisations can be public, private, or third sector partners, with interest and expertise in human behaviour and based in the UK. Early career fellowship applicants can use their existing connections with non-academic organisations to co-develop their application. In addition, Centre-UB can facilitate the connection between fellowship applicants, with mentors from partner organisations and the University of Birmingham (see section 2.4 for more information). The fellowship application form will need to include information related to the contribution of the partner organisation to the fellowship (including the arrangements of mentoring, training and development support, working within the partner organisation, access to information from the partner organisation) and the expected academic outputs and partner-related outcomes.

*Training support for Early Career Researcher Fellow*

All Centre-UB early career researcher fellows will receive training from the University's Impact Hub on putting their research into action to ensure they are well-equipped for careers within and beyond academia. They will be able to participate in workshops regarding impact, working with industry and

commercialisation, working with policy-makers, public engagement, media training, and writing for non-academic audiences. Early career researcher fellows will play a central role in the Centre-UB research community, together with the cohorts of Centre-UB postgraduate researchers. Early career researcher fellows will have access to all Centre-UB webinars, masterclasses, and workshops, as well as research seminar series and internal research conferences within their 'home' department at the University of Birmingham. Together with their mentors, the research fellows will create an individualised training and development plan tailored towards their skills, knowledge, and career aims. Activities to support their development as a behavioural researcher should align with their career aspirations and will need to be specified in the fellowship application form.

## **2. Early Career Researcher Fellowship applications**

Centre-UB will award 8 early career researcher fellowships per cohort. The third cohort will start in October 2026.

The Centre-UB early career researcher fellowship will cover salary and associated costs and up to £10K for all other costs (e.g., research costs, travel, dissemination). Successful candidates will be appointed at entry level Grade 7. Please see section 2.3 for more detail related to the funding.

The fellowships provide funding and support for up to one year full-time, or up to two years part-time to give early career researcher fellows time to prepare for a successful career in research either within or beyond academia. Part-time grants are intended for applicants whose normal working hours are part-time and not for applicants who wish to hold the fellowship and continue other employment. The exception to this are applicants whose PhD was undertaken on a part-time basis alongside permanent part-time employment. Applicants in this position can continue to hold their part-time employment alongside the fellowship but all other fellows must spend 100% of their working time (whether full-time or part-time) on the fellowship and cannot take any secondary paid employment during the course of the grant.

### ***2.1. Eligibility for early career fellowship programme***

We invite applications from candidates who have recently completed their PhD (see eligibility criteria) and would like to continue their training in behavioural research, as well as applications from candidates who aim to return to a period of training within academia following time working within a non-academic organisation. We specifically invite applicants who have completed their PhD in an area related to behavioural research and within the ESRC remit. Applicants from different research backgrounds will need to justify in their application how their background makes them a suitable candidate for a fellowship in the area of behavioural research and within the ESRC remit, and how the fellowship aligns with their career aspirations as a behavioural researcher.

#### ***Eligibility criteria for candidates who have recently completed their PhD***

- PhD graduates who completed their PhD at a UK research organisation.
- Awarded their PhD no more than two years prior to 6 May 2026 – please note that the date for awarding the PhD is the date of the formal notification of the award of the PhD from the awarding institute. Exceptions can be made in the case of a career break for personal circumstances, e.g., parental or maternity leave. Please contact us on [centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk) for advice on this.
- Candidates who have not been awarded their PhD yet at the time of submitting their application are eligible on the condition that they have passed their viva voce subject to

amendments by the application deadline (i.e., May 6 2026) and have been awarded their PhD by the fellowship start date of 1 October 2026. The date for awarding the PhD is the date of the formal notification of the award of the PhD from the awarding institute.

- Candidates who have worked as a post-doctoral researcher, research associate, or teaching fellow, as part of larger projects where they were not the principal investigator, are eligible to apply. Those who have received a substantial individual award as the primary investigator (e.g., fellowship) after handing in their PhD thesis are not eligible to apply. Please contact us on [centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk) to check eligibility.
- Permanent members of staff in an academic position with a research component are not eligible to apply.

*Eligibility for candidates who aim to return to a period of training within academia following time working in a non-academic organisation*

- PhD graduates who completed their PhD at a UK research organisation.
- Candidates who have worked in a non-academic organisation for at least two years.
- Prior to their career within a non-academic organisation, candidates who worked no more than two years within an academic organisation as a post-doctoral researcher, research associate, or teaching fellow following their PhD. Those who have received a substantial individual award as the primary investigator (e.g., personal fellowship) after handing in their PhD thesis are not eligible to apply. Please contact us on [centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk) to check eligibility.

## **2.2. Early Career Fellowship Requirements**

All fellowships are required to be co-developed together with a mentor based at the University of Birmingham and a mentor based at the non-academic partner organisation. Other universities are not eligible as a partner organisation. The application needs to detail how the mentors will support the fellowship, including the development of the fellow as a behavioural researcher. Research conducted during the applicant's PhD can be used for the translation of behavioural research to knowledge exchange and impact component of the fellowship. It is possible for the academic mentor(s) to have been part of the PhD supervisory team of the fellow, but it should be clarified what specific support will be provided to the fellow that was not available during the PhD. Therefore, in the case that the supervisory team remains involved, it is recommended to include an academic mentor with expertise that is different to the supervisory team.

Applicants will need to provide the following information in their application:

1. Aim of the fellowship, including the relevance of the research area and broader project, fit within the remit of the ESRC and understanding behaviour, as well as the personal career aspirations of the applicant.
2. Description of the components of the fellowship, which includes activities related to a) development as behavioural researcher (compulsory – at least 25% of fellowship), b) knowledge exchange and impact (optional – no more than 75% of fellowship), and c) further research (optional – no more than 75% of fellowship). It should be clear how the activities will support the overall aims of the fellowship.
3. Anticipated outcomes of the fellowship, including academic and non-academic outputs.
4. The process adopted for co-development of the fellowship together with the partner organisation in line with the aims of the fellowship and the career aspirations of the fellow.
5. Mentoring arrangement with UoB and partner organisation mentors.

## **2.3. Funding including costs and staffing**

Support for costing your application will be provided by Research Strategy and Services Division (RSSD) Colleagues of the University of Birmingham department/school who will host the fellowship. The University of Birmingham mentor is expected to facilitate contact with this team and provide support around the budget development where needed. Prior to submitting the application, the RSSD team must approve the costings included in the application.

The total cost for each fellowship can include the following:

- Fellow's salary costs (at Grade 7 point 28)
- Estate and indirect costs at bespoke rates which will be advised by RSSD
- Up to a maximum of £10,000 for all other costs (e.g., costs related to dissemination, training, travel and subsistence, conference attendance, research costs). A maximum of £1,000 can be costed within this £10,000 for partner organisation mentoring costs. University of Birmingham mentor costs are ineligible. Please discuss eligibility of the proposed costs with RSSD.

Each proposal will need to show these figures as 100% of full Economic Cost (fEC) and the ESRC will meet 80% fEC on the proposals submitted. All proposals will be subject to ESRC's funding rules in place at the time the award is issued, as outlined in the [ESRC research funding guide – UKRI](#).

#### ***2.4. Support for connecting early career researcher fellows, partner organisations, and academic mentors***

Centre-UB can provide support for connecting fellows, partner organisations, and University of Birmingham mentors in several ways:

- If you are a fellowship applicant and have a fellowship idea, but are looking for appropriate University of Birmingham and partner organisation mentors, we can link you with potential mentors from within our network.
- If you are a partner organisation, have a specific interest related to behavioural research, and are interested in supporting the development of an early career fellow, but are looking for an appropriate applicant and/or University of Birmingham mentor, we can advertise your area of interest on our website and put you in touch with a suitable University of Birmingham mentor.
- If you are a University of Birmingham academic member of staff and are interested in being a mentor for a fellowship, we can advertise your area of interest on our website.

To take advantage of these opportunities, please complete this [online form](#). To allow sufficient time to make the connections and prepare a fellowship application, we ask you to complete these forms as soon as possible and no later than 23 February 2026.

You can find information about the research interests and academic members of staff who would like to mentor a fellow on [our website](#).

### **3. Application process**

All applicants must submit:

1. an **Expression of Interest** Form by **4pm March 26 2026** using this [online form](#).
2. the **full application** form together with the required attachments no later than **4pm May 6 2026** to [centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

### **3.1. Expression of Interest – 4pm March 26 2026**

All potential applicants are required to complete a brief online [Expression of Interest form](#). This information will be used to ensure we have appropriate peer reviewers for your application, and the information will not be used in the evaluation of the fellowship application. This form includes information about the partner organisation and mentors who will be supporting the fellowship. It also includes a brief provisional summary of the proposed fellowship. We realise that the fellowship activities might be adapted while finalising the full application.

### **3.2. Full application – 4pm May 6 2026**

The full application form, together with the mandatory attachments, will need to be submitted to [centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centre-ubehaviour@contacts.bham.ac.uk) no later than 4 pm May 6 2026.

#### *Mandatory attachments for full application*

1. *Centre-UB Early Career Researcher Fellow Application form – available from the fellowship section of the [Centre-UB website](#)*

This includes information about the co-design of the fellowship together with the partner organisation, case for support (including aims and rationale of the fellowship, anticipated academic and non-academic outputs, pathway to impact, and programme of activities), finance, and justification of resources requested.

2. *Applicant CV (no more than 2 sides of A4)*

The CV must show the date the PhD was awarded or the scheduled date for the viva voce, brief details of education to date, any awards received for work or training, previous employment history, conference papers or publications, and any other relevant information for the fellowship.

3. *Abstract of PhD thesis of applicant*

This should be the abstract of the thesis as submitted and approved by the awarding research organisation. This information will be used to assess the research background of the doctoral research. We specifically invite applicants who have completed their PhD in an area related to behavioural research and within the [ESRC remit](#). Applicants from different research backgrounds will need to justify how their background makes them a suitable candidate for a Centre-UB fellowship and how the fellowship aligns with their career aspirations as a behavioural researcher.

4. *Partner organisation supporting statement (maximum one side of A4) and summary CV of mentor (maximum two sides of A4)*

The partner organisation must complete a 1-page statement confirming the organisation's support for the proposal in line with the contributions stated in the application form and process of co-producing the fellowship. A combined mentor statement and CV (maximum 2 sides of A4) of the mentor within the partner organisation should also be included. The mentor will need to be suitable for supporting the work conducted during the fellowship.

The mentor statement should demonstrate that the mentor:

- has considered the individual applicant's needs carefully and tailored their programme of support to their individual needs and career aspirations
- will support fellowship activities to achieve the aims of the fellowship
- will provide mentorship to support the development of the early career fellow

5. *Head of School/Department/Institute statement (maximum one side of A4)*

The head of the school/department/institute within the University of Birmingham who will host the fellowship must complete a statement confirming the support for the proposal. This statement must demonstrate their strong support for the proposal guaranteeing as a minimum that the named mentor will be available and that appropriate support facilities, including office space and appropriate computing facilities, will be made available to the fellow during the period of the grant. In addition, the school/department/institute will be expected to show they have a commitment to the support and promotion of early career researchers and lecturers.

The head of school/department/institute statement should:

- confirm that the applicant will be accepted into the school/department/institute as a member of staff for the purpose of undertaking the proposed programme of work
- explain how the proposed programme of work will fit in with the school/department/institute's wider research programme
- confirm that the applicant will have access to the same training and development opportunities open to permanent members of academic staff within their school/department/institute
- confirm that the applicant's work and progress will be subject to the same monitoring and appraisal as those of other academic staff within their school/department/institute

*6. University of Birmingham mentor statement and summary CV (maximum two sides of A4)*

A combined mentor statement and CV must be included as an attachment to the proposal. Where there is more than one mentor, the statement should be completed by the primary mentor but must detail the contribution to be made by all mentors. Brief CVs of no more than one side of A4 should be included for each of the other mentors.

Fellows will be required to have a University of Birmingham mentor throughout the period of the grant and the mentor should be identified at the time of applying. The mentor should be a researcher conducting behavioural research and have experience, and a strong interest, in the applicant's field of research. The mentor will need to be suitable for supporting the work conducted during the fellowship. Less experienced mentors will need to be supported by a more experienced mentor. It is possible for the University of Birmingham mentor(s) to have been part of the PhD supervisory team of the fellow, but it should be clarified what specific support will be provided to the fellow that was not available during the PhD. Therefore, in the case that the supervisory team remains involved, it is recommended to include a University of Birmingham mentor with expertise that is different to the supervisory team. Thus, the University of Birmingham mentor statement should demonstrate that the mentor:

- has considered the individual applicant's needs carefully and tailored their programme of support to their individual needs
- will support fellowship activities to achieve the aims of the fellowship
- will also keep the fellow's long-term career prospects clearly in mind.

The mentor statement must address all of the above points and not just be a general reference or personal statement from the mentor.

*7. Referee statement (maximum two sides of A4)*

The applicant must provide one referee statement to contribute to the assessment process. The referee may be the PhD supervisor, however if the supervisor is the proposed mentor,



the referee statement should be from a second academic. Similarly, a reference from the proposed mentor from the partner organisation is not acceptable.

Additional attachments if applicable (i.e., if new data will be collected):

*8. Data management plan (maximum three sides of A4)*

It is a requirement of the [ESRC Research Data Policy](#) that all applicants planning to generate **any** new dataset as part of their grant must include a Data Management Plan. The Data Management Plan should be used as an opportunity to describe how the data, i.e., primary input into research and first-order results of that research, are going to be managed – starting from planning for research and through the life-cycle of the grant until data is accepted for archiving by the UK Data Service. If applicable, the data management plan needs to be agreed with the partner organisation. The ESRC recognises the importance of research data quality and provenance. Research data generated by ESRC-funded research must be well-managed by the grant holder during the grant period to enable their data to be exploited to the maximum potential for further research.

As part of our reporting requirements to the ESRC, Centre-UB is required to provide diversity statistics for the overall funding applicant pool. All applicants are therefore requested to answer a [brief online survey](#). Upon completion of the survey, you will be given a unique identifier which you are asked to add to the application form. Please note that all questions can be answered with ‘prefer not to say’. This information will not be available to the panel evaluating the fellowship applications, and will never be disclosed to the mentors or other members of the Centre-UB leadership or management team.

## 4. Assessment of applications

Each application will be assessed using the following criteria

- Aims of the fellowship
  - Focus on understanding behaviour and fit with [ESRC remit](#)
  - Programme of activities, including overall relevance and coherence of the work proposed, as well as feasibility for a fellowship
  - Personal development opportunities
  - Ethical considerations
- Impact and outcomes
  - Potential for impact and expected pathways to impact
  - Anticipated outcomes, including academic and non-academic outcomes
  - Clear description of activities and methods used to achieve the anticipated outcomes.
  - Clear description of activities and methods used to achieve the anticipated impact. If the fellowship does not specifically include a component of translation of behavioural research to knowledge exchange and impact, the potential pathways to impact will need to be described in the application, even though the generation of impact through these pathways is outside the scope of the fellowship.
- Partner organisation collaboration
  - Clear link between partner organisation collaboration and overall aims of the fellowship in line with the career aspiration of the fellow
  - Evidence of co-development with partner organisation



- Evidence of contributions of the partner organisation throughout the fellowship, including support for the personal development of the early career fellow and the deliverables of the overall fellowship
- Mentors
  - Evidence of co-development with mentor(s)
  - Appropriate expertise in mentor team to support the fellowship, including the fellowship activities and the personal development of the early career fellow
  - Clear arrangements for mentoring with University of Birmingham and partner organisation mentors.
- Value for money
  - Clear and adequate justification of the costs being requested
- Data management plan (if applicable)
  - Clear plan for data management throughout the lifecycle of the award including specific plans for archiving with UK Data Service

Centre-UB will peer review all applications and will make funding decisions on behalf of ESRC. Successful applicants will then be required to submit their proposal to ESRC.

## 5. Timeline

- Call announced – July 2025
- Online information event – throughout autumn and early 2026
- Deadline for Expression of Interest form – 4pm March 26 2026
- Closing dates for applications – 4pm May 6 2026
- Decisions confirmed to applicants – June 2026
- Successful proposals submitted to ESRC – July 2026
- Fellowships commence – 1 October 2026