

Scottish Parliament Academic Fellowship Scheme

The purpose of the Scottish Parliament is to hold the Scottish Government to account, to scrutinise legislation and to represent the people of Scotland by debating issues of national importance. The [Academic Fellowship Scheme](#) enables academics to work on projects with the Parliament in support of this purpose.

The scheme aims to:

1. Provide the Parliament with specialised resources which allow it to undertake and communicate analysis which would otherwise not be possible
2. Increase the use of academic knowledge, skills and research within the Parliament
3. Promote knowledge and understanding of the Parliament within the academic sector.

The scheme, which has been in place since 2017, is managed by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). Parliamentary fellowships will usually be hosted by SPICe.

KEY POINTS

- Fellows may apply to work on a project specified by the Parliament (stream 1) or a project they propose themselves (stream 2 - the open call).
- The scheme is open to academics from all disciplines, including those at an early stage in their career.
- Candidates without a PhD and post-doctoral experience will, however, only be taken on in exceptional cases where they can demonstrate significant experience in their field.
- Work can often be carried out remotely through e-mail, video-conferencing etc. However, this depends on the project and there will be projects where elements of work in the Parliament building will be necessary.
- **The deadlines will be stated in each advert**
- To apply for projects proposed by us (stream 1), applicants need to fill in our online application form **and** send us a cv and project details
- As of this year, we have introduced a more streamlined application process for the open call (stream 2). Applicants for the open call need to send us a one-page document outlining a proposed project plus a cv. We will then consider if the project might be of interest and, if so, will contact the applicant to discuss in more detail.
- Details of how to apply for both parts of the scheme can be found on our [Academic Fellowship webpages](#) and in our guidance document
- If you have any queries, please email academia@parliament.scot

WHAT DO ACADEMIC FELLOWS DO?

Academic fellows are usually hosted in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). SPICe provides impartial analysis and information to MSPs of all political parties and to parliamentary committees, often to short deadlines.

SPICe will agree the general focus of your work at the outset – this will include work on a specific project. In particular, we would normally expect you to:

1. Produce a SPICe output (normally a short written briefing and a blog) separate to any academic publications you produce based on your work with us.
2. Present your work internally in the Parliament (e.g. to a parliamentary committee or at a seminar or other event).
3. Be part of a community of academics we could tap into in the future.

The exact outputs needed will, however, be agreed on at the outset of the project.

In addition, as parliamentary business can be varied and fast changing, we would also expect you to take a flexible approach to ensure your work has the greatest impact. SPICe researchers may also ask for advice within your area of expertise for example in producing committee papers or answering enquiries.

Working within SPICe, you would be expected to operate in an impartial manner in partnership with a SPICe researcher. Overall, we aim to give you a rich and rounded experience of the parliamentary environment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the eligibility guidelines?

- a) Applicants will normally have completed a PhD in a relevant area of study. There are no eligibility rules based on years of post-doctoral experience, however, the level of experience will be a factor taken into account in our assessment of your application.
- b) Candidates without a PhD and post-doctoral experience will only be taken on in exceptional cases where they can demonstrate significant experience in their field.
- c) The scheme is open to academics from all subject areas and disciplines.
- d) Applicants must, in principle, be working within an academic institution. You must seek permission from your academic institution and/or employer before applying for stream 1.

What is the maximum time over which a project can be carried out?

Unless otherwise indicated on our website, we have not specified a maximum time – timescales will be discussed and agreed on with the successful applicant and their academic institution. It is, however, important that the timescale for the project takes into account the needs of the Scottish Parliament as some research may lose its relevance if not completed within a certain period.

What is the policy on flexible working?

Although there will be situations where work is necessary in the Parliament building, we are aware that many academics will not be situated near the Parliament and welcome people working remotely from their own institution. We also welcome applicants who wish to work part-time on a project.

The precise working arrangements for each fellowship will, however, depend on the scope of the project as some projects may need more work in the Parliament than others. In addition, there can be advantages in working in the Parliament (even if only for a short period of time) in order to get a rounded experience of the parliamentary environment.

Preferred working arrangements should be proposed in your application. We will agree working arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

For projects specified by the Parliament, candidates who cannot receive funding from their institutions are asked to indicate the amount of funding required. Can you clarify on what basis, please?

It is up to the prospective fellow and their academic institution to set out the basis upon which their costs are determined and the sources of their funding.

However, the Parliament does have a limited budget which it can use to fund or part-fund fellows (funding provided is typically in the range of £3-4,000).

Parliamentary funding can, however, not be guaranteed and, when applying, we would encourage applicants to also consider funding sources from within their institutions or from other sources. The sources of funding and amount needed (if any) should be noted in the application form.

Re project proposal – I'm not entirely sure what types of projects will be considered.

It is up to the applicant to persuade us that the project they submit provides us with information, analysis and expertise that the Scottish Parliament needs. We will consider any project that meets the requirements set out in the documentation on our website.

I would be keen to run by some ideas for projects with someone before submitting an application – would that be possible?

We are keen to keep the process open and transparent. Therefore, we are not able to discuss submissions in detail with applicants in advance of the deadline. In the interests of fairness, we cannot give an unfair advantage to one applicant over others. However, we are happy to give general guidance on the process and our expectations to applicants to help them in their application.