

Guidance for applicants

The British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society are three of five Designated Competent Bodies (DCBs) appointed by the Home Office to assess applications for the Research and Innovation Talent Visa under the Home Office Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) Visa route.

As DCBs, the Academies are responsible for considering whether an individual who makes an application is demonstrably 'exceptionally talented' or has 'exceptional promise'.

Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) is subject to a limit of 2,000 visas per year (beginning on 6 April one year and ending on 5 April the following year).

The Academies assess applications in the following areas and are allocated a minimum number of endorsements by the Home Office from the total annual pool.

- The British Academy – for humanities and social sciences (150 endorsements);
- The Royal Society – for natural sciences and medical science research (250 endorsements);
- The Royal Academy of Engineering – for engineering (150 endorsements).

A full list of the disciplines covered by the Academies can be found in the 'Guidance on Policy for UK visas under Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)' document available on the [Home Office website](#).

Holders of a Research and Innovation Talent Visa that were endorsed through Exceptional Talent are eligible to apply for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) after three years. Holders endorsed through Exceptional Promise are eligible after five years.

Overview of the application process

The application for a Research and Innovation Talent Visa (Tier 1 Exceptional Talent) is in two stages:

1. Endorsement application

You must apply to be endorsed by one of the above Academies by filling out the [online application form](#) and then send the relevant evidence via post to the Home Office as instructed by the form. You will also need to provide various pieces of evidence as described below.

The Academy to which you have applied will conduct an initial eligibility check to check that you meet the mandatory and qualifying criteria outlined in the next section. If you meet the initial eligibility criteria, your application will be reviewed by experts in your field who will look at the strength of the evidence you provide. Meeting the mandatory and qualifying criteria does not therefore mean that your application will be endorsed. It only means your application can proceed to a full assessment.

As each application is assessed by relevant experts, the Academies unfortunately cannot advise on the likelihood that an individual application will be endorsed.

Should the full assessment conclude that your application demonstrates exceptional talent or exceptional promise in relation to published assessment criteria, it will be endorsed by the relevant Academy to the Home Office. You will then be notified by the Home Office about the outcome of your application.

If your application does not receive endorsement, you can apply for an endorsement review. The review will check that documents have been correctly passed on to the Academy by the Home Office and that the correct processes have been used.

Should the decision be upheld then the process ends here. You can still apply via another visa route or re-apply to this route with revised supporting evidence.

Please note that the Academies' review each application based on its own merits and reserve the right to not recommend endorsement if the evidence provided is not deemed sufficient to consider the applicant to be a leader with exceptional talent or potential leader with exceptional promise in their field.

Finally, please ensure you read the [Home Office guidance](#) prior to submitting an application.

2. Immigration application

If your application is endorsed you will become eligible to apply for a visa on the [Home Office website](#). You will need to supply a copy of your endorsement letter. The Academies have no involvement in this stage of the process and endorsement by a DCB is not of itself decisive as to whether a Research and Innovation Talent Visa will be issued. The Home Office will consider, for example, immigration aspects of your application including whether General Grounds For Refusal apply and, if you are in the United Kingdom already, whether you are eligible to switch into the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route. For further information, please see the [Home Office guidance](#).

Guidance and eligibility criteria for Stage 1: Endorsement

Eligibility and assessment criteria for Research and Innovation Talent Visa Applicants (Exceptional Talent / Exceptional Promise)

The Academies cover a range of disciplines in the areas of science, medicine, engineering, social science and humanities for active researchers in academic, industry or government research institutions. Please see the full list of disciplines in the [Home Office guidance](#).

There are two routes through which applicants can apply to be considered for endorsement: the Exceptional Talent route and the Exceptional Promise route. Applicants should indicate on the application form under which category they are applying. Further details on these routes can be found below.

Initial eligibility criteria

Exceptional Talent	Exceptional Promise
<p>Mandatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an active researcher in a relevant field, typically within a university, research institute or within industry; • Have a PhD or equivalent research experience; • Provide a dated letter of personal recommendation supporting the Tier 1 application from an eminent person resident in the UK who is familiar with your work and your contribution to your field, and is qualified to assess your claim to be a leader in your field; • Meet one or more of the following Qualifying Criteria. <p>Qualifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a member of your national academy or a foreign member of academies of other countries (in particular any of the UK national academies); • Have been awarded a prestigious internationally recognised prize; • Provide a written recommendation from a reputable UK organisation concerned with research in your field. The dated letter must be written by an authorised senior member of the organisation, such as a Chief Executive, Vice-Chancellor or similar, on official paper. 	<p>Mandatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an active researcher in a relevant field, typically within a university, research institute or within industry; • Have a PhD or equivalent research experience (including industrial research); • Provide a dated letter of personal recommendation supporting the Tier 1 application from an eminent person resident in the UK who is familiar with your work and your contribution to your field, and is qualified to assess your claim that you have the potential to be a leader in your field; • Be at an early stage in your career; • Have been awarded, hold, or have held in the past five years, a prestigious UK-based Research Fellowship, or an international Fellowship or advanced research post judged by the competent body to be of equivalent standing.

Assessment criteria

If you meet the initial eligibility criteria, your application will immediately go forward to experts in your field for a full assessment which will look at the strength of the evidence you provide against the following assessment criteria to determine whether your application demonstrates exceptional talent or exceptional promise.

Please note we will assess applicants based on the evidence they provide. It is at the UK Academies' discretion to assess each application on its own merits and to grant endorsement.

Experts assigned to assess your application will be asked if there are any conflicts of interest and, if these exist, another expert will be asked to comment instead.

The assessment will look at:

Exceptional Talent	Exceptional Promise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether you are the winner of a prestigious prize or award;• Whether you have secured significant funding for your work in the past ten years;• Whether you are regarded as a leader in your field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether you have provided evidence sufficient to demonstrate that you have the potential to be a future leader in the field;• The level of additional funding secured during or following tenure of a relevant fellowship;• Whether you have provided evidence of a relevant prize or award for early career researchers;• The significance of your contribution to your field relative to your career stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your strength of track record/career history (including your international standing, the significance of your publications, prizes and research funding awarded, patents, and the impact of past innovation activity, in a company, academia or as an individual);• The strength of the supporting statements in the letter of personal recommendation, and evidence in relation to qualifying criteria, including a written recommendation from a reputable UK organisation concerned with research in your field (if relevant);• The expected benefits of your presence in the UK in terms of the contribution to UK research excellence and to wider society, including potential economic benefits from exploitation of intellectual capital.	

Accelerated process options

There are two options for certain applications to be considered under an accelerated process.

If the relevant DCB is satisfied that you meet the conditions for consideration under either option, your application will be fast-tracked and the Academy will make a recommendation on endorsement within 14 working days of receiving your application from the Home Office.

To confirm that you wish to apply for the accelerated process you must select the relevant 'accelerated process' option on the endorsement application form. Please ensure that you submit evidence to demonstrate how you meet the option you have selected.

You can apply for an accelerated process in the following cases:

1. Recognised Peer-reviewed Fellowships

The Academies provide an accelerated endorsement process to international awardees of specific peer-reviewed research fellowships from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and its Councils, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, Wellcome Trust, Academy of Medical Sciences, British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society. These have already undergone a stringent peer review process, considered to be equivalent to those of the Academies. If you hold one of the Fellowships named on the accelerated list, you can apply through the accelerated process (Fast Track) and be assured of an endorsement.

Your fellowship awarding body may provide you with additional guidance to support your application.

Please check carefully whether your fellowship award appears on the list. Holders of other fellowships or grants not on the list must apply following the standard process.

2. Senior Academic and Research Appointments

The Academies provide an accelerated endorsement process for individuals appointed to eligible senior academic or research positions at UK higher education institutions (HEI) or eligible research institutes. This process offers greater certainty for applicants who have received a job offer that they will be endorsed.

To apply using this accelerated process you must provide a statement of guarantee from the Director of Human Resources or equivalent of the appointing HEI or eligible research institute. It should be dated and confirm that the recruitment process for your appointment met the below list of criteria:

- that the employing organisation is a UK HEI or research institute listed on the UK Academies list of eligible organisations available below;
- that the job was advertised and an open competition was held for the position (applications where there was not an open competition may be considered providing all other criteria are met and a reasonable explanation is provided for that decision);
- that a job offer of an eligible senior academic or research position at the host institution has been made and accepted (please specify the position and Department). (Eligible senior positions are Professor, Associate Professor or Reader in a HEI or equivalent positions at a research institute, such as Senior Group Leader);
- that at least three references were required and received;
- at least four senior academic representatives from the host institution were present on the interview panel;
- that at least one senior external expert in a relevant field, who is not employed by the host institution, was consulted during the recruitment process (either participating in the interview or by providing written input).

Please check carefully that your employing organisation appears on the list and that your appointment is of a sufficiently senior position. Individuals being employed by an organisation not on the list, or appointed to a less senior role, may apply through the standard process.

Your employing institution may provide you with additional guidance to support your application.

Fellowships eligible for the accelerated process under the Exceptional Talent category:

British Academy Global Professorships
British Academy Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships
British Academy Mid-Career Fellowships
British Academy Wolfson Research Professorship
British Heart Foundation Personal Chairs
Cancer Research UK Programme Foundation Awards
Cancer Research UK Senior Cancer Research Fellowship
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Professorial Fellow
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Established Fellow
Royal Academy of Engineering Research Chairs
Royal Academy of Engineering Research Chair in Emerging Technologies
Royal Academy of Engineering Senior Research Fellowships
Royal Society Industry Fellowship
Royal Society Research Professorship
Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award/
Royal Society Wolfson Fellowship
Wellcome Trust Investigator Awards in Humanities and Social Science
Wellcome Trust Investigator Awards in Science
Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellowships
Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellowships in Basic Biomedical Science
Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellowships in Clinical Science
Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellowships (if host organisation is located in the UK)

Fellowships eligible for the accelerated process under the Exceptional Promise category:

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Leadership Fellows and Leadership Fellows – Early Career route
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) David Phillips Fellow
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) Future Leader Fellowship / Discovery Fellowship
British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship
British Heart Foundation Clinical or Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellows
British Heart Foundation Senior Clinical or Senior Basic Science Research Fellows
Cancer Research UK Advanced Clinician Scientist Fellowship
Cancer Research UK Cancer Prevention Fellowship
Cancer Research UK Career Development Fellowship
Cancer Research UK Career Establishment Award
Cancer Research UK Clinician Scientist Fellowship
Cancer Research UK Population Research Postdoctoral Fellowship
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Future Research Leaders
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) New Investigator Grants
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Early Career Fellow
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) UKRI Innovation Fellow
Medical Research Council (MRC) Career Development Award
Medical Research Council (MRC) Clinical Research Training Fellow
Medical Research Council (MRC) Clinical Scientist Fellow
Medical Research Council (MRC) New Investigator Research Grant
Medical Research Council (MRC) Senior Clinical Fellow
Medical Research Council (MRC) Senior Non Clinical Fellow
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Independent Research Fellow
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) UKRI Industrial Innovation Fellow

Fellowships eligible for the accelerated process under the Exceptional Promise category (continued):

Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Fellowships
Royal Academy of Engineering Research Fellowships
Royal Society/British Academy/Academy of Medical Sciences Newton International Fellowship
Royal Society-CNR/-K.C. Wong/-Kohn/-Sino British Fellowship Trust/-Shooter International Fellowship
Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship
Royal Society Industry Fellowship
Royal Society University Research Fellowship
Royal Society/Wellcome Trust Sir Henry Dale Fellowships
Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) Ernest Rutherford Fellow
Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Career Development Fellowships (Stage 2)
Wellcome Trust Investigator Awards in Science
Wellcome Trust Investigator Awards in Humanities and Social Science
Wellcome Trust University Awards in Humanities and Social Science

UK Independent Research Organisations and Institutes

Alan Turing Institute
Babraham Institute
Cancer Research UK (institutes and units)
Culham Centre for Fusion Energy (CCFE)/Euratom
Diamond Light Source Ltd
Earlham Institute
EMBL – European Bioinformatics Institute
The Francis Crick Institute
Health Data Research UK (HDR UK)
John Innes Centre
Natural History Museum
National Physical Laboratory
The Pirbright Institute
Plymouth Marine Laboratory
Quadram Institute
Roslin Institute
Rothamsted Research
Royal Botanic Gardens – Kew
The Royal Institution of Great Britain
The Sainsbury Laboratory
Science Museum Group
Scottish Association for Marine Sciences
Square Kilometre Array
UK Dementia Research Institute
UK Space Agency
Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute
Zoological Society of London, Institute of Zoology

Organisations eligible for the senior academic or research appointments accelerated process

UK Higher Education Institutions

All UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that can award degrees as defined by law

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and its Councils – Institutes and units

Daresbury Laboratory
MRC Harwell
MRC Head Office
MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology
MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences
MRC Toxicology Unit
National Oceanographic Centre
NERC British Antarctic Survey
NERC British Geological Survey
NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Rutherford Appleton Laboratory
UK Astronomy Technology Centre
BBSRC Institutes are shown as independent research organisations on the right hand side

Application content and documentation

In order for your application to be considered for endorsement to apply for the Research and Innovation Talent Visa, you must submit the following documents:

- a. A completed Home Office application for endorsement form, which can be completed online;
- b. A short curriculum vitae outlining your career and publication history (no more than three sides of A4 in length);
- c. A mandatory letter of personal recommendation from an eminent person resident in the UK supporting your application. The person must be familiar with your work and your contribution to your field, and qualified to assess your claim for Exceptional Talent or Promise. Full details of what the letter should include can be found in Annex A of this document;
- d. Evidence in relation to at least one of the qualifying eligibility criteria listed above.

Please note that the endorsement application form asks you to provide details of your qualifications, significant papers/prizes etc. You should not provide copies of these documents with your application unless these specifically demonstrate that you meet the qualifying criteria (as per point d. above).

Annex A:

Guidance for applicants: letters of recommendation

The UK Academies reserve the right to determine whether organisations or individuals are well established and widely acknowledged as possessing expertise in your field.

Mandatory Letter of Personal Recommendation (Exceptional Talent/Exceptional Promise)

The mandatory letter of personal recommendation (Exceptional Talent/Exceptional Promise) should be from an eminent person resident in the UK. The person must be:

- resident in the UK
- familiar with your work and your contribution to your field; and
- an eminent individual who is qualified to assess your claim of Exceptional Talent or Exceptional Promise.

Please note that we have the right to refuse your application or request more information, which could significantly delay your application, if evidence is not provided that the author is a credible referee.

The letter should include:

- how the eminent person knows you;
- details of your achievements in the specialist field;
- how in the opinion of the eminent person you exhibit Exceptional Talent/Promise;
- how you would benefit from living in the UK; and
- the contribution you would make to UK research excellence and to wider society.

Please ensure that the letter is as detailed as possible. The more detail that is provided the better in determining why the referee believes you meet the criteria for Exceptional Talent / Exceptional Promise.

The letter should be signed and dated. It should also include full contact details of the author including personal email address and direct telephone number so that personal contact can be made if necessary.

Letters of recommendation should be written specifically for this purpose and include the information detailed above. The letter should not be a general all-purpose reference letter.

Qualifying Letter of Personal Recommendation (Exceptional Talent)

The qualifying letter of recommendation (for Exceptional Talent) should be from a reputable UK organisation concerned with research in your field. The letter must be written by an authorised senior member of the organisation, such as a Chief Executive, Vice-Chancellor, Director of Human Resources, or similar. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list but that the more reputable the endorser the stronger we will consider the letter of recommendation to be.

Acceptable organisations would be those that are widely acknowledged as possessing expertise in your field; they should be familiar with your work, and able to recommend you with confidence.

The letter should be signed and dated and written on official headed paper. It should also include full contact details including an email address and telephone number so that contact can be made if necessary.

Letters of recommendation should be written specifically for this purpose and include the information detailed above. The letter should not be a general all-purpose reference letter.