

John Fell Fund Guidance Notes (Social Sciences Division)

For any questions, please contact the SSD John Fell Fund Inbox by emailing:
fellfund@socsci.ox.ac.uk

Introduction

Each year, the John Fell OUP Research Fund receives £5 million from Oxford University Press. The Fund is named after the seventeenth-century 'father' of the modern Press, Dean of Christ Church, Vice-Chancellor and Bishop of Oxford.

Part of the £5m is granted directly to the four academic divisions of the University for strategic projects. However, most of the money is allocated through termly open calls which Oxford University academic staff can participate in. These calls aim to foster creativity and a proactive approach to research opportunities in all subject areas, and particularly interdisciplinary fields. The Fund makes seed-corn and start-up grants, and provides (direct) staffing costs and research expenses to stimulate applications to external agencies.

Reports on completed projects indicate that awards made from the John Fell Fund are successfully fulfilling its purpose, leveraging additional funding at a ratio of up to 1:7.

The Fund is managed by a team based in Research Services, and by teams based in each academic division. The information provided below applies for the John Fell Fund in general but some aspects of it are only relevant for applicants based in the Social Sciences Division. For more information about the Fund, please see the University's [John Fell Fund Website](#).

NOTE: all applications must be made via the online application system IRAMS, and **must receive departmental approval before the application deadline**. The Heads of Departments or their nominees need to provide a clear ranking of all applications submitted (i.e. there should be no ties), and provide comments on the strategic priorities for their department. Separate rankings should be provided for main awards and small awards.

Applications are then reviewed by a divisional panel before they are forwarded to the John Fell OUP Research Fund Committee ('the John Fell Fund Committee') which makes all funding decisions. Please check internal deadlines with your departmental research facilitators, and make sure you allow enough time for any departmental approval processes.

WHEN PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION, PLEASE FOLLOW THE CHECKLIST PROVIDED IN ANNEX 1.

Deadline

The John Fell Fund has three open rounds of Main and Small Award applications. **The deadline is 12 noon on Wednesday of Week 2 every term.**

Budget

Small Awards: for projects up to £10,000.

Main Awards: for projects over £10,000. Please note that the John Fell Fund Committee rarely approves projects over £65,000 and will only recommend these for funding if the proposal is found to be, across the assessment criteria considerably strong and compelling.



Cross-Divisional applications

The John Fell Fund Committee aims to strengthen support for major interdisciplinary research initiatives at the University by prioritising projects that build strategic collaborations between academic divisions.

A cross-divisional project must meet two criteria: academics from more than one division are involved **and** all the divisions involved must consider it a strategic priority for their division.

Please get in touch with the John Fell Fund officers at all Divisions involved at least 4 weeks prior to the deadline in order to discuss the project's strategic importance. Divisional John Fell Fund contacts can be found here: <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/funding/internal/jff>.

Eligibility

All subject areas are encouraged to apply, and interdisciplinary and/or cross-divisional projects are especially welcome.

Whilst the eligibility criteria for main award applications and small award applications are not exactly the same (please see below), overall the PI should be a current salaried employee of the collegiate university holding an academic post, or a research Fellowship awarded competitively (e.g. Royal Society, University Research Fellow, Junior Research Fellow, British Academy Fellowship, Leverhulme Trust Fellowship). If you are a college-only employee, you can still apply as PI but you need a department to host your application and, if successful, administer your award.

The same eligibility rules apply to both the principal applicant and any co-applicants.

Retired and emeritus Fellows, and DPhil and other students, are not eligible to apply to the John Fell Fund (including as co-applicants).

Main awards

For main award applications (more than £10,000), you must hold a post that includes responsibility for developing your own research agenda (for example, Associate Professor, Professor, Senior Research Fellow, Fellowship awarded competitively). If you do not hold such a post but your department would support you to apply for external funding as PI or co-I, then you can apply for a John Fell Fund main award. However, **a letter from your Head of Department must be attached to your application** explaining why holding the award is consistent with your work/duties, and confirming it is not in conflict with any requirements from external funders that may be paying for your salary/part of your salary.

Small awards

For small award applications (up to £10,000), the committee will also consider applications from early career researchers employed by the collegiate University **provided that the applicant has the support of their line manager**. The line manager should supply a statement of support including confirmation that holding the John Fell Fund award would be consistent with the applicant's work and duties, as well as with any commitments with external funders that may be paying for the applicant's salary/part of their salary.

Researcher Co-Investigators

The status of Researcher Co-Investigator (RCo-I) allows for named researchers working on JFF projects who are providing significant intellectual input to the development of the research proposal and management of the project to have their contribution recognised. Researcher Co-Investigators are typically early-career research staff at the University who might not be eligible to apply to JFF in their own right.



The RCo-I's details should be included in the 'Researcher Co-Investigator' field on the Investigators section of the online application form. Also, any salary costs requested for the Researcher Co-Investigator's time working on the project should be included as a Directly Incurred cost within the Financial Details section of the application. Please also indicate in the description field of the costing table that the staff costs requested are for a RCo-I.

As RCo-Is are early-career staff, applications involving a proposed RCo-I must include a **SEPARATE** supporting statement from the PI/department providing details of the contribution by the RCo-I to the design and management of the project, as well as any mentoring arrangements that will be set in place for the RCo-I. The statement should also provide an explanation on how a John Fell Fund Award would benefit the career development of the RCo-I.

This statement should be attached to the Part 2 Case for Support section of the application (additional to the usual page limit). A 1-page CV for the RCo-I should also be included.

NOTE: The RCo-I status is intended to support early career research staff in the development of their career and not bringing established external scholars to Oxford. The review panel might not favourably assess applications if the RCo-I status is used to bring to Oxford an established external scholar.

Please contact your divisional [John Fell Fund officer](#) and/or your departmental support officer if you are not sure about eligibility.

Assessment Criteria

The John Fell Fund seeks to fund proposal that clearly demonstrate:

- Excellence and intrinsic merit of research.
- Potential for long term sustainability and academic impact of the project.
- Relevance to department and divisional research strategy.
- Necessity for John Fell Fund versus other sources of funding.
- Value for money, noting in particular the potential for shared use of equipment and other facilities.

Both the Small Awards and Main Awards panel will consider whether the proposal:

- Meets the John Fell Fund criteria outlined above.
- Is feasible.
- Is written in a clear and concise manner (i.e. needs to be understood by a non-specialist panel).
- Is within the page limit (2 pages for Small Awards, 4 pages for Main Awards. The template **must not be amended**). Applications beyond the page limit and/or for which the template has been amended may be declined.
- Be appropriately costed in detail (see the [University's Fell Fund website for guidance on eligible costs](#)).
- Include a realistic plan for outputs.
- Demonstrate a clear plan for the sustainability of the project beyond the duration of the John Fell Fund award and how external funding will be sought.



Decision-making process for John Fell Fund applications

John Fell OUP Research Fund Committee

The John Fell Fund Committee is a sub-group of the University's Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC) and the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC). It is Chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and has representatives from all academic divisions (MPLS, SSD, MSD, and Humanities). The John Fell Fund Committee membership can be found at: <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/jfc>. The Committee meets in Week 10 every term.

Social Sciences Division John Fell Fund Panel

The SSD John Fell Fund Panel consists of the Head of Division and the Associate Head of Division (Research). This panel makes the decisions regarding which applications from SSD should be recommended for funding to the John Fell Fund Committee. The panel makes these decisions based on the assessments produced by the Divisional Small Awards Assessment Panel and the Divisional Main Awards Assessment Panel.

Small Awards Assessment Panel

SSD Small Award applications are assessed, scored and ranked by the Divisional John Fell Fund Small Awards Panel according to the John Fell Fund criteria described further above. The ranking and scoring are confirmed by the SSD John Fell Fund Panel, which in turn submits its recommendations for funding to the John Fell Fund Committee. For some awards, the release of funds may be conditional on, for example, the PI attaining research ethics approval before the project starts. Small Award grants are approved by the Chair of the John Fell Fund Committee.

The divisional allocation each term for Small Awards is c. £75,000.

The SSD Small Awards panel is chaired by a senior academic from our division, and also consists of two permanent members (the Senior Divisional Research Facilitator and the Divisional Research Facilitator) and two members that serve for only one academic year: a fixed-term researcher (normally a member of the Divisional Research Staff Forum) and a Departmental Research Facilitator.

Main Awards Assessment Panel

Main Award applications are assessed, scored and ranked by the Divisional Main Awards Assessment Panel according to the John Fell Fund criteria described further above. The ranking and scoring are confirmed by the SSD John Fell Fund Panel, which in turn submits its recommendations for funding to the John Fell Fund Committee. For some awards, the release of funds may be conditional on, for example, the PI attaining research ethics clearance before the project starts. SSD Main Award recommendations for funding are considered alongside applications from all divisions at the termly John Fell Fund Committee meeting.

The amount of money available for SSD Main Awards each term is dependent on the amount of funds available within the John Fell Fund. Usually, SSD is able to recommend that SSD Main Awards are funded up to the value of c. £250,000 - £300,000 per term in total.

The assessors for the Divisional Main Awards Assessment panel are academics based in the departments from across the division according to the following rota:



Michaelmas Term	Hilary Term	Trinity Term
Economics	Sociology	DPIR
OSGA	ODID	Education
Law	SOGE	Anthropology
OII	BSG	SPI
Archaeology		SBS

Applicants should note that scores and rankings from assessors from the same department as the candidate will be discounted in the overall rankings. However, the members of the SSD John Fell Fund Panel will be aware of these scores and will at all times aim to be fair and consistent when deciding which applications to recommend for funding to the John Fell Fund Committee.

Adjustments to budgets and queries about applications

Given the funding envelope available each term and the desire to fund as many outstanding proposals as possible, the SSD John Fell Fund Panel may contact PIs whose applications are being considered for funding with budgets over £65,000 to request that PIs adjust their budgets downwards. The SSD John Fell Fund Panel may also contact PIs with queries and requests for clarification about applications.

Notification of application outcome

The central John Fell Fund administration team notifies applicants about the outcome of their application and handle the administration of awards (e.g. generating cost codes). See the [University John Fell Fund website](#) for more information.

Resubmissions

Resubmissions are by invitation only, either from the John Fell Fund Committee or the SSD John Fell Fund Panel, and will be assessed fairly against all other applications. They will not hold higher priority.

Feedback on applications

Due to the high volume of applications received each term, individual feedback will only be provided on applications that have received an invitation to be resubmitted.

Contact:

If you cannot find the information you require on the John Fell Fund website or in the Divisional advice, or have further queries, please contact the SSD John Fell Fund Inbox (fellfund@socsci.ox.ac.uk).