



MERTON COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Fellowships for Early Career Researchers 2026

Humanities & Social Sciences: English, Music, Law

1. GENERAL

Merton College proposes to appoint four three-year, fixed-term Early Career Researchers from 1 October 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter. Three Fellowships are available across the Humanities subjects of English, Music, or Law. The posts are available to early career researchers and are intended to provide opportunities for the successful applicants to establish a research profile and to help prepare postholders for academic careers.

Candidates who have already held a comparable career development appointment at Oxford or another university are not eligible to apply. A comparable appointment is deemed to be a salaried research-only appointment for the purposes of self-directed research.

Applications are particularly welcome from women, candidates with a disability, and black and minority ethnic candidates, who are under-represented in academic posts at the University of Oxford. All applicants will be judged on merit, according to the selection criteria.

The College is an equal opportunities employer.

Merton College

There are thirty-nine self-governing and independent colleges at Oxford, giving both academic staff and students the benefits of belonging to a small, interdisciplinary academic community as well as to a large, internationally-renowned University. The collegiate system fosters a strong sense of community, bringing together leading academics and undergraduate and postgraduate students across a wide range of subjects, and from different cultures and countries.

Merton College was founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, and is one of the oldest colleges in Oxford. It was the first fully self-governing college in the University of Oxford and was originally founded for twenty fellows, with undergraduates being formally

admitted in the early 1380s. Over the centuries, many eminent scholars and cultural leaders have called Merton home including three Nobel Prize winners and an Abel Prize winner. Merton College has a strong commitment to excellence in research and teaching across a range of subjects in the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Sciences. Information about Merton College can be found at <http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk>.

The College community currently comprises around 590 students (320 undergraduates and 270 postgraduates), some 70 Fellows, 40 other academic staff and over 100 members of support staff. On average the College has around 12 early career fellows at any one time. A number of Merton Fellows and graduates take part in the College's interdisciplinary discussion groups, currently organised in the following areas: the History of the Book, and Biomedical and Life Sciences. In addition, the College convenes a number of research talks throughout the year and fosters international collaboration through an active Visiting Researcher scheme including provision of accommodation for scholars.

The College strives to create a diverse, welcoming, inclusive and supportive community in which its members can thrive.

2. RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

Early Career Researchers are expected to engage full-time in research and its dissemination in branches of the Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences. The successful candidate will be expected to:

- (a) propose, plan and manage a high-quality programme of original research;
- (b) publicise the outcomes of that research through publications and presentation of papers;
- (c) establish and develop appropriate research collaborations with other academics in Oxford and elsewhere;
- (d) submit an annual report to the Research Committee of the College on their research activities;
- (e) engage in the academic life and activities of the College.

Early Career Researchers may ask (or be asked) to undertake a limited amount of teaching and on occasions asked to undertake work associated with the admissions process, but they are under no obligation to do so.

There are many college activities which go beyond the narrowly academic. It is hoped that the Early Career Researchers will participate fully in the life of the College, recognising that a college can function successfully only if its Fellows are animated by a spirit of service which elicits a commitment to the life of the community beyond the prescribed contractual duties.

3. OTHER DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

The appointment is based on the understanding that the successful candidate undertakes to fulfil the following duties and obligations of service:

- (i) The Early Career Researcher will be elected as a Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow of the College. This category of Fellowship does not carry membership of the Governing Body. At the end of their first year, the person appointed may, if eligible to serve

as a charity trustee, be elected to a Governing Body Fellowship for years 2 and 3. The annual process by which Early Career Researchers may nominate one of their number for election to a Governing Body Fellowship is set out in the Bylaws.

- (ii) Throughout their appointment, Early Career Researcher may be asked to serve on Committees and similar College bodies or to serve from time to time as an Officer of the College, if such a request is made by the Fellowships and Appointments Committee. If elected as a member of the Governing Body of the College, the Early Career Researcher will be obliged to attend its meetings (three in each term). The College is a registered charity; the members of the Governing Body are its trustees and must conduct business in accordance with UK charity law.
- (iii) Fellows are strongly encouraged to participate in events which foster closer links between the Senior Common Room (SCR) and Middle Common Room (MCR).

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

Candidates should:

- hold a recently completed doctorate, or be close to completion of a doctorate and will have submitted their thesis no later than three months before the start date of this post. Those who formally submitted their doctoral thesis for viva voce examination before 1 October 2024 are not eligible, unless they have since had a career break (e.g. a period of parental leave, family commitments, illness) or if there are other exceptional circumstances.
- have research expertise in their chosen field, commensurate with the candidate's career, as demonstrated by a recently completed (or close to being completed) doctoral thesis, published or forthcoming books or articles in refereed journals (as relevant to the candidate's field); or evidence of such future achievement (as relevant to the candidate's field);
- have evidence of active participation in the successful dissemination of their research findings to fellow academics at national and international conferences or in professional research seminars;
- have a well-planned and coherent plan of research for the duration of the appointment which can either be the further development of the doctoral work or an entirely new area, which is expected to make a valuable contribution to the candidate's field.

5. PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Early Career Researcher will be assigned an academic mentor who will discuss work in progress and support the individual in making effective use of this appointment to prepare for an academic career.

The Early Career Researcher will be encouraged to access the support of Oxford University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) as well as People and Organisational Development (POD). The CTL has its own well-developed programme of short courses for academic staff and the Early Career Researcher will be expected to undertake the

introductory session for new academic staff and any other training required as a minimum, unless evidence of equivalent training can be produced. CTL and POD will also be able to advise on other Oxford resources, such as the Careers Service.

The Early Career Researcher will be encouraged to complete successfully the 'Advanced Teaching and Learning' programme, offered by the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning, by the end of the third year of this appointment.

6. REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS

Successful candidates will be appointed as an Early Career Researcher for a fixed-term period of three years. The start date of the appointment may, with the agreement of the College, be brought forward or delayed in exceptional cases, to accommodate personal circumstances; if so, the terminal date of the appointment will be adjusted accordingly.

The annual salary is £39,749 p.a. (2024-2025 rate). The 2025-2026 rate is under review.

The salary will normally be adjusted if the Fellow is in receipt of other remuneration and may be subject to an annual cost-of-living increase.

Successful applicants will normally be required to be based in Oxford during the tenure of the appointment, except for any fixed-term periods away for research trips and fieldwork.

Fellows are entitled to free lunches and dinners at the Common Table when the kitchens are open. Other allowances and facilities are offered at the discretion of the Governing Body. An Early Career Researcher may be permitted to undertake teaching up to a maximum of six hours a week during full term. The understanding is that Merton will have first refusal of any teaching offered by an Early Career Researcher.

The following conditions will apply to this appointment:

- a) Single accommodation within College can be provided at an annual rent of £6,800 (current rate), subject to availability. Alternative accommodation may be available in a College flat a short distance from the College precinct. A College flat is also suitable for those with a partner. The occupant of a College flat will be charged an annual rent of £6,800 p.a. (current rate) and is responsible for all charges relating to Council Tax and utility bills for the property. The College has very limited accommodation suitable for families;
- b) Auto-enrolment as a member of the Universities Superannuation Scheme, with a right to opt out;
- c) The College will provide private medical insurance (the premium is assessable as a taxable benefit);
- d) Research expenses of up to £3,800 p.a. (current rate) under the relevant College Bylaw;
- e) The College provides for sick leave and family related leave on the same basis as the University of Oxford, taking into account the fixed-term nature and particular circumstances of the employment;

- f) Membership of the Senior Common Room, for which a subscription is payable;
- g) There will be no entitlement to sabbatical leave;
- h) It is not usually advisable for academic staff to take holiday during the ten-week university term. Public holidays falling within Term (0 to 9th week) are normally regarded by the College as ordinary working days for those with teaching responsibilities.
- i) The appointment is conditional on verification of the successful candidate's right to live and work in the United Kingdom.

Sundry other regulations concerning academic facilities (e.g. research expenses) and domestic arrangements in the College (e.g. ordinary meals, Senior Common Room and Guest Room facilities) are contained in the Statutes and Bylaws of the College (by which the Early Career Researcher will be bound) and in a Handbook for new Fellows, available from the Senior Tutor.

7. DURATION OF THE APPOINTMENT AND NOTICE PERIOD

This post is a three-year fixed-term appointment from 1 October 2026 (or as soon as possible thereafter). It is College policy to attempt to advance the careers of academics at an early stage in their career by appointing suitable candidates as Early Career Researchers. It is an integral feature of the appointments of Early Career Researchers that they are time-limited and cannot be renewed so that this policy can be implemented for a continuous succession of academic staff.

Four weeks' notice may be given by either party.

8. RIGHT TO WORK IN THE UK

The appointment will be conditional on satisfactory provision of proof of the right to work in the UK. Applicants who would need a work visa if appointed to the post will be supported through the visa application process by the College's Human Resources team and the University of Oxford Staff Immigration Team.

They are also asked to note that the visa application process will require them to submit no later than three months prior to the start date of this post, either a copy of their doctoral award certificate, or an academic reference confirming that their doctorate has been awarded, or an academic reference confirming that they have submitted their thesis, if they have not yet completed.

9. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

Those wishing to apply should complete the online application form at <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/vacancies> **AND** e mail to jrfadmin@merton.ox.ac.uk the following as a **single PDF document in the named format 'Last Name, First Name, Subject'** and in this exact order:

- the ECR Candidate Information Form 2026 (word document on our website);
- a covering letter;

- a CV (including publications, scholarships and prizes); and
- a research proposal for the duration of the Fellowship. Please note that, excluding bibliography, this should be around two sides of A4 in length, and no more than 1,000 words including footnotes. It should describe your future research plans and their relationship to your past and/or ongoing research;

Please put “**ECR Application Last Name, Subject**” in the subject line of the e mail.

Applications will be accepted only if made according to the following instructions:

- Hard copy applications are not necessary and late applications will not be accepted.
- Candidates applying more than one year since submitting their doctoral thesis should bring to the College’s attention any special factors to be considered in accordance with the selection criteria in section 4. Please note that this information will be shared with members of the selection panel.

Longlisted candidates will be invited to submit written work samples, of up to 15,000 words, for consideration at the shortlisting stage. It is anticipated that this will be shortly after 19th November 2025. At interview, shortlisted candidates will be asked to give a short presentation on their research followed by questions from the appointment committee.

It is anticipated that interviews will be held on **Thursday 29 January 2026**. Candidates are advised to hold this date in their diaries.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 9.00am on Friday 17th October 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.

The deadline for candidates to submit any queries in relation to these Further Particulars is 9.00am on Friday 10th October 2025. Any enquiries should be directed in the first instance to the HR Team at jrfadmin@merton.ox.ac.uk

References

When completing the application form, you will need to provide details of two referees. Applicants should ask their referees to write by the closing date to the HR Team at jrfadmin@merton.ox.ac.uk **Applicants are responsible for requesting references from their referees and for ensuring that references arrive by 9.00am on the closing date of **Friday 17th October 2025****; they should therefore give referees enough time to write in their support. The College will not request references directly from the referees.

Applicants are also requested to inform their referees that, under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, the references they provide will be regarded as disclosable to the subject of the reference unless it is clear that the reference has been given in confidence. The College asks that a reference given in confidence should be marked “**strictly confidential**” on the letter of reference itself. Referees should also be asked to note that even where a reference is marked “strictly confidential” it could still be disclosed to the subject of the reference if that subject so requested and the College’s Data Protection Officer deemed it appropriate.

Candidates are encouraged to complete the Equal Opportunities Recruitment Monitoring form at the end of the Application form. The information collected on the equal

opportunities recruitment monitoring form does **not** form part of the selection process and will **not** be circulated to the selection panel. It will be used solely to monitor the effectiveness of the College's Single Equality Scheme which is published at www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about/college-policies.

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The policy and practice of Merton College require that all staff are afforded equal opportunities within employment. Entry into employment with the College and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. Subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

11. PRIVACY NOTICE

To view our Privacy notice please see here <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/privacy-notices-and-ropas>.