

HESPAL-Cara Fellowship

Pilot scheme

Guidance Notes

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Key highlights

Launch of call: August 2026

Fellowship duration: Up to 18 months visiting fellow placements at UK universities, starting April 2027

Deadline to submit the HESPAL-Cara application: 15 September 2026

HESPAL-Cara Fellowship Introduction

The **HESPAL–Cara Fellowship** is a pilot initiative that offers a unique postdoctoral research opportunity for academics in Palestine to undertake an 18-month visiting fellowship at a UK university. Delivered in partnership with the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara), the fellowship responds to the challenges facing Palestinian higher education sector by providing academics at risk with the opportunity to conduct their research in an academic, well-resourced, and internationally connected environment.

The HESPAL–Cara Fellowship seeks to strengthen the resilience and long-term capacity of the Palestinian higher education sector. Fellows are expected to maintain strong links with their home institutions throughout the fellowship and to return equipped with enhanced research expertise, international partnerships, and new knowledge that can benefit their departments, students, and wider academic communities.

The HESPAL–Cara Fellowship objectives are to:

- Support academics at risk to continue their research.
- Develop sustainable academic links between Palestinian and UK universities.
- Support professional networks to sustain fellows' longer-term careers.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the HESPAL–Cara Fellowship, applicants must:

- Be a Palestinian resident in the West Bank.
- Be employed as a lecturer and/or researcher at a Palestinian university for at least 6 months.
- Be nominated by their employing university and demonstrate a commitment to returning to their home institution at the end of the fellowship. *
- Be a postdoctoral researcher, holding a PhD degree.
- Be an academic at risk; (i.e.: Academic at risk is defined as an individual who is, or has been, at risk of discrimination, persecution or violence.)
- Hold a valid passport and be available to start the fellowship in the UK in April 2027.
- Demonstrate a sufficient level of English to undertake academic research in the UK, communicate with colleagues at the host institution, and efficiently benefit from the fellowship opportunity.

Priority will be given to:

- Academics with no previous placements abroad.
- Candidates at early- or mid-career stage.
- Applicants with strong research experience, publications, and/or a clearly defined research plan and purpose for the fellowship.
- Qualified women academics, and academics with disabilities.

***For this pilot scheme, fellowship opportunity will be open only to universities in the West Bank**

Fellowship offers and conditions

The fellowship covers the main expenses for selected fellows, including:

- Academic and research-related fees at the host university.
- A monthly stipend for the duration of the fellowship.
- Additional support will be provided towards travel and visa

The following conditions apply to the fellowship:

- Fellows are expected to return to Palestine upon completion of the fellowship.
- Fellows are also expected to cover any additional personal or unforeseen expenses.
- Fellowship does not support dependents.

Fellows are required to submit termly progress reports, summarising activities, achievements, and outputs during the fellowship

How to Apply

The HESPAL–Cara Fellowship opportunity will be launched through HESPAL Palestinian partner universities in the West Bank. Each participating university will have to:

- Circulate the fellowship opportunity among its eligible academic staff.
- Nominate **one** candidate who meets the fellowship's eligibility criteria and whose proposed fellowship aligns with the university's priorities

The application process will take place over 2 stages:

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (Eol)

- A) Nominated candidates will have to submit an Expression of Interest (Eol) to the British Council's HESPAL Programme using the link below:

Application link: <https://form.jotform.com/262093580698368>

Application deadline: 15 September 2026

The Eol application must include:

- A letter of interest (Maximum 2 pages, explaining the applicant's motivation, relevance of the fellowship to their academic career, and expected contribution to their home institution.)
 - A copy of a valid passport.
 - An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae (CV).
 - Official English-language copies of all higher education qualifications (Bachelor's, master's and/or PhD).
 - Any additional supporting documents relevant to the application, such as publications or research outputs.
- B) A technical selection committee will review eligible Eols and shortlist up to **eight candidates**.
- C) Shortlisted candidates' applications will be shared with Cara, and applicant will be required to submit a Risk Statement* directly with Cara to allow them to conduct their internal eligibility checks.

*Risk statements should explain the circumstances that place the applicant at risk and how these have affected their academic work and research activities (2 pages).

*Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Stage 2: Cara Online Application

Confirmed eligible candidates will be invited to complete the online Cara Fellowship application, and upload the following documents:

- Research proposal (4-5 pages describing the intended research)
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- Copy of a valid passport.
- Official copies of all higher education qualifications (Bachelor's, master's and/or PhD), together with certified English translations where applicable.
- Previous publications or other relevant research outputs.
- Official document confirming the applicant's academic employment.
- English language certificate, if available.
- 3 Referees - two of whom should be academic referees.

Please note that further information and supporting documents may be requested during the assessment process.

Applications that are incomplete or submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Following submission, applications will undergo an academic assessment by Cara and prospective UK host universities. Based on the outcome of this assessment, fellows will be selected and matched with suitable host institutions in the UK.

Selection Process

Level 1: Nomination, Eligibility Review and Shortlisting

- Interested Palestinian universities in the West Bank nominate one candidate for the HESPAL– Cara Fellowship opportunity, accompanied by a nomination letter explaining how the candidate aligns with the university's priorities.
- Nominated candidates submit their EoI and complete Stage 1 of the application process.
- The British Council reviews all submitted applications for eligibility, and through an evaluation committee, shortlists up to eight candidates.
- The British Council shares the shortlisted candidates' applications with Cara for their internal eligibility assessment.

Level 2: Cara Application, UK University Placement & final selection

At this level, Cara will lead the selection and placement process and will serve as the main point of contact for candidates, while keeping the British Council HESPAL team updated on key developments. The selection steps are:

- Shortlisted candidates confirmed eligible by Cara will be invited to complete the Cara online fellowship application and submit all required supporting documents.
- Cara shares shortlisted applications with identified UK host universities.
- Host universities review applications, assess academic fit, and identify potential supervisors, and where needed, may conduct academic interviews with candidates.
- Host universities make the final decision on the winning candidates and communicate their offers to Cara.
- Cara informs the British Council HESPAL team of the selected fellows, which in turn will notify successful candidates and relevant partner universities.

- Cara issues the official fellowship award letters and coordinate the next steps with the selected fellows and host universities.
- Cara provides support, in close coordination with the host university, on administrative processes and pre-arrival logistics, including visa arrangements and accommodation.
- Cara will also support fellows throughout the placement, including mentoring, English language provision, and webinars, until the completion of the fellowship.

General Information

For enquiries, please contact:

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