

The Council for At-Risk Academics Palestine Programme- Virtual Fellowships:

Terms of Reference and Application Guidelines

Cara's Palestine Programme - Virtual Fellowships scheme responds to the urgent need to safeguard research capacity and knowledge systems in Palestine, which are under extreme pressure and at risk of being lost. Building on tested collaborative models and aligning with Palestinian reconstruction priorities, the Virtual Fellowship scheme enables Palestinian Academics to continue their research, to maintain and build peer networks, and remain connected to the global academic community.

As a pilot initiative, the programme strengthens partnerships between Palestinian and UK universities, supporting academic continuity while contributing to the long-term recovery and resilience of the Palestinian higher education system.

Programme

The Virtual Fellowships scheme aims to contribute to strengthening resilience in Palestinian Higher Education by facilitating the continuation of scholarly activity through peer support and collaboration. The Palestine Virtual Fellowship Scheme is a **one-year research Fellowship** to connect Palestinian academics with UK Universities in a structured programme of academic exchange.

Fellowships are not full time, they are intended to complement existing academic responsibilities and provide an opportunity to advance a new or ongoing research project in the Fellow's field of expertise in collaboration with a UK university (Newcastle University, University of Sussex, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, the Open University, The University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow). The Palestine Virtual Fellowship scheme aims to strengthen cross- border research connections and support engagement with international scholarly communities.

Each Fellowship includes:

- Academic affiliation with a UK university
- Connection to one or more UK- based academic peer(s) to support the continuation of research activities, strengthen academic skills, and foster international collaboration. Opportunities to participate on-line in research seminars, workshops, and professional development activities at the hosting UK University.
- Assistance with publication strategies, career development, and networking opportunities.
- Access to UK University digital resources, including library collections and online academic materials
- Access to training, wellbeing provision and networking opportunities offered through Cara and partner organisations
- A Fellowship **stipend of £6,000*** to support participation in the programme. Fellows residing in Gaza will receive an additional **£2,000 location supplement**.
- Additional **research engagement funds** will be available for small scale project-related expenses, memberships, E- conference attendance, professional development, wellbeing support, specialist services, equipment, internet access, local workspace costs, etc.

*Payments will be made in regular instalments exclusively through bank transfers. All disbursements will be subject to prior approval and compliant with Cara's financial procedures.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Hold a PhD degree*
- Be employed by, or maintain an ongoing affiliation with, a Palestinian University in Gaza or the West Bank (applicants must have been employed by their home university for a minimum of 6 months)
- Reside in Gaza or the West Bank
- Have a level of English that is of a standard suitable for academic exchange
- Meet Cara's At- Risk assessment

*Applicants are asked to identify themselves as Early Career or Experienced academics.

Early Career – less than 8 years post PhD
Experienced – More than 8 years post PhD

Applications are particularly encouraged from **Female academics** and those who have not previously participated in similar schemes.

Fellowships

14 Virtual Fellowships are open to academics from all disciplines, excluding research projects aligned with technologies or knowledge areas subject to UK export control regulations, particularly those requiring export licences under the UK Strategic Export Control Lists of [High Risk research](#). These include defence and military-related research, as well as research involving controlled dual-use technologies. Proposals that fall within controlled technology areas or have clear defence or military applications will not be considered.

Applicants are encouraged to consider feasibility of research proposals, including access to materials, equipment, and infrastructure, before making an application.

Cara is working together with 7 leading UK Universities listed below. Applicants are requested to review and select up to three universities which best align with their research interests in order of preference, see below for further details:

[Newcastle University](#)

All disciplines

[University of Sussex](#)

All disciplines

[The Open University](#)

All disciplines

[University of Glasgow](#)

All disciplines

[University of Edinburgh](#)

All disciplines

[University of Cambridge](#)

Education and Business only

[University of Bristol](#)

Medical Sciences only including Clinical research, Epidemiology, Public Health, Primary Care

Education only (Gaza only). Specific areas incl. Education reconstruction; Disability and inclusion; Community led Education provision; Trauma informed pedagogies; Education – agency, identity, belonging. See [Gaza Education Research Fellowship](#) for further detail.

Priority will be given to research proposals that align with the following thematic areas drawn from Palestinian Ministry of Education, priorities outlined in the April 2026 report jointly issued by the

United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union and the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza:

- Infrastructure, energy, and urban development
- Health systems and environmental sustainability
- Education, culture, and social development
- Economic systems, governance, and employment
- Digital technologies and innovation systems

Applicants should consider how their research specialism and/or project aligns with one or more of these areas.

How to apply

Applications are made through the submission of an online form and supporting documents available on our website www.cara.ngo/palestine-programme

Required documents include:

1. **CV** (max. 3 pages, min. font size: 10) including most recent publications, academic achievements and career history to date
2. **PhD Certificate** (or if not available, official confirmation of successful defence of a doctoral thesis)
3. **Evidence of English Language ability** –English language certificates such as an IELTS, TOEFL or Duolingo, evidence of publications in English, evidence of study in English
4. **Official letter of support from the home university**, signed by an authorised representative, confirming the applicant's current affiliation and academic status, issued on official letterhead. If this is not possible to obtain before the deadline, evidence of employment such as a signed employment contract or an appointment letter, staff id card, evidence of paid employment such a payslip is also acceptable.
5. **Identity document** – Copy of a passport, or identity document with a photograph

Written submissions:

Research proposal: Applicants are requested to outline a research project they wish to conduct during this one-year Fellowship. This proposal can be new or ongoing, and should include alignment to expertise, project scope and proposed / foreseeable outcomes. Clearly identified delivery challenges, including potential field, lab, or political risks and practical mitigation strategies. Please note, this is a research project outline of 500 words (max) to be refined on selection.

University hosts: Applicants should identify up to three University partners from a possible seven, in order of preference. For each selection, applicants are requested to provide a clear rationale for their choice. This could include alignment with research groups/ clusters, individual researcher(s), access to specialist archives/ materials/ expertise at the host university. Existing connections and/or a clear reasoning for the potential strength of research alignment.

At- Risk statement: Applicants are asked to provide an At-Risk statement outlining personal risks, threats of persecution and/or any direct dangers faced. Please explain how your current situation has affected your ability to continue to pursue your academic career. Outline why you are applying for this fellowship and how it relates to the progression of your research and career. What do you expect to achieve as a result of participation in this programme. Please consider both professional and personal development outputs. (e.g. publications, impact of achieving research project objectives, submission of articles / papers to reputed journals, networking building, etc) – 500 words (max).



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Please note: If academic certificates are not available at the time of application, please contact palestine@cara.ngo

Applications must be submitted in English. For documents in other languages, please include an English translation.

Multiple applications by the same applicant, are not permitted. In this case, only the first submitted application will be considered. No changes can be made after submission.

Please contact palestine@cara.ngo if applicants experience connectivity or technical difficulties during submission.

Ethics

All research activities must comply with the national legislation of the country in which the research takes place. Applicants are advised to outline any applicable ethics considerations in the application. Cara reserves the right to request further information on ethical aspects of the research project at any stage. For selected fellows, where necessary, Ethics reviews/ approvals will take place at the start of the placement with support from the UK partner university.

Selected fellows are expected to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in undertaking their research.

Use of AI

Use of generative AI in applications is not permitted. Evidence of the use of AI tools such as Chat GPT, Claude, Co-Pilot in any written submissions, will result in your proposal being rejected. Cara supports individual academics, and for this reason we need to hear and understand your circumstances, motivations, expertise and goals. Language errors will not be taken into account in the evaluation. In case applicants use generative AI tools to support the preparation of their application, responsibility for the content, accuracy, and authenticity of all the submitted information remains entirely with the applicant.

Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated through a qualitative assessment of all submitted materials. Each will be carefully assessed and scored against the below criteria in relation to career stage.

Risk (Unweighted) – Risk statements will be assessed against Cara's **At-Risk threshold** and results combined with below scores.

Relevance (50%) - Clarity of motivation, including immediate challenges. Relevance of research experience and training to the research project described. Clear and detailed rationale for host university choice(s). Alignment of research project with, and contribution to Palestinian High Education thematic priorities. Strong potential to benefit both personally and professionally from programme engagement.

Impact (50%) - Clarity of planned research project including methodology, design, suitability to answer the proposed question and impact. Clear rationale for UK University choice(s) and clear potential collaborative impact. Contribution to Palestinian Higher Education priorities. Expected impact both personally and professionally from programme engagement and future career plans.

Selection Process

The application process will be managed by Cara in close consultation with UK University partners.



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Stage 1: Applications submitted by **Monday, 5 October 2026** deadline will be checked for completion, submission of required documents, eligibility and due diligence criteria, including international sanctions, and political exposure. Eligible applications will progress to the next stage.

Stage 2: Applications are reviewed and scored against key criteria outlined above - Relevance and Impact. Each application will be scored at least twice and an average score recorded.

Stage 3: A panel will then review ranked applications and decide on a shortlist of applicants to share with host Universities. Taking into account balanced representation (discipline, gender, career stage, university, location).

Stage 4: Language proficiency and identity interviews take place online

Stage 5: Short-listed candidates (approximately three times the number of available placements) will be shared with each University host for academic matching. Applicants may be interviewed about their research project during this stage. Final selections and reserve candidates are made.

Stage 6: Final selections are confirmed by Cara considering partner university selections and location quotas outlined below.

West Bank – Up to 3 Fellowships / Gaza – up to 11 Fellowships

Stage 7: Cara communicates outcomes to all remaining applicants and onboarding begins. Selected Fellows will be required to sign a participation agreement containing financial and engagement commitments.

Timeline

Friday, 4 September 2026	Applications open
Monday, 5 October 2026	Applications close at 5pm Palestine time
October 2026	Review, evaluation and matching
Mid November 2026	Notification of final selection and onboarding.

Feedback

As the Palestine Virtual Fellowship Scheme is a pilot programme, monitoring, evaluation, and participant feedback is very important. Selected fellows may be asked to take part in evaluation activities, including short progress reports, surveys, interviews or feedback sessions. Feedback will be used only for programme improvement, reporting and the design of future programmes. Participation in monitoring and feedback activities will be conducted with respect for confidentiality, safety, and ethical standards.

Terms and conditions

Selected Fellows are required to sign a Fellowship agreement, which includes terms and conditions such as the expectation to commit to regular interactions with their peer academic counterparts. Research teams agree project aims/ milestones at the outset of each placement. Expected academic outputs include but are not limited to research publications, impact of achieving research project objectives, submission of articles / papers to reputed journals, contributions to research conferences/ symposia, networking building, etc.

Selected Fellows are also expected to engage with onboarding and professional development sessions at the start of and throughout the fellowship, where it is safe to do so. Cara Virtual Fellowships are intentionally flexible, and a Fellow should not take undue risks in the delivery of their project or when interacting or honouring commitments to UK University academic colleagues.



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Stipends will be paid directly into bank accounts at regular intervals throughout the placement. As a UK registered Charity, Cara are required to undertake due diligence checks, including routine politically exposed person (PEP) and sanctions screening. This is a requirement for all international transfers to non-UK bank accounts to ensure compliance with local and international financial regulations.

Data Protection

Cara is the data controller for the information you provide and processes it in line with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Applicant's details are used only to assess your application and to support your Fellowship, are stored securely, and are shared only with the selection panel and relevant Fellowship partners, never with other third parties without your consent unless required by law. Contact us for further information on this policy at palestine@cara.ngo.

Challenge procedures

Unsuccessful applications can only be challenged where a mistake may have occurred in the evaluation of an application. In this case, challenge requests must be made by email to palestine@cara.ngo, within **two weeks** of the selection result. Only one request can be made per application. The request must detail the challenge grounds, which can only be procedural, such as factual errors, deficiencies in the eligibility check or evaluation process, or the existence of a conflict of interests. Request on the merits of the application itself or on the comparison of the evaluation of proposals from other applicants will not be reconsidered.

Challenge requests made within this two-week window will be reviewed and applicants informed if their request have been rejected or upheld. Decisions made at this stage are final.

For more information and contact points

Website - www.cara.ngo/palestine-programme

Email - palestine@cara.ngo

September 2026