

# Polarities and Regions Network Plus: Research Projects

## Background

This Research Projects scheme is funded by the UKRI Network Plus ‘Shifting Global Polarities: Russia, China, and Eurasia in Transition’. This funding initiative brings together a network of leading expertise and centres of excellence from across the UK and overseas to address gaps and needs in research during a period of major societal, geopolitical, and environmental transformation spanning Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central, East & Pacific Asia. The funding was awarded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of their Building a Secure and Resilient World strategic theme.

The initiative aims to advance innovative new partnerships within academic and policy circles linked to a range of urgent thematic areas including social upheaval, geopolitics and security, environmental crisis, human rights, Russia-China relations, and post-conflict reconstruction. The network’s activities aim to assist understanding and identification of global risks and help inform better decision-making.

Partners include the Universities of Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and Oxford, together with the Institute of Development Studies and the Royal United Services Institute in the UK. Overseas, partners include Colgate University in the USA; the Ukrainian Catholic University; OSCE Academy Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan; National Taiwan University; Helsinki University in Finland; and Hokkaido University in Japan.

[UK Research and Innovation](#) creates knowledge with impact by investing over £8 billion a year in research and innovation through the UK’s nine leading funding councils.

## Research projects at a glance:

- **Number:** Up to 10 funded projects per year
- **Amount:** Up to £14,000 per project – to enable original research, policy analysis, synthesis of knowledge
- **Duration:** Activities should take place over a period of up to 12 months max. (shorter periods are permissible) – to begin no earlier than 1 April 2025 and no later than 1 May 2025
- **Eligibility:** Applicants will be from diverse backgrounds including academia, policy, NGOs
- **Focus:** Activities should fit with the Network’s *regional focus*, *priority theme* for that round and *main organising themes*

## Aim of the Research Projects

The Research projects are intended to further the reach of the Network and will engage with one (or more) of the Network’s *main organising themes* (see below) and help to advance the *priority theme* for that round. The priority theme for the Network this year (2024-25) is Culture, Media and Resistance in a Polarising World.

Each project will be allocated a **mentor(s)** from the Network (see below for contact details). Applicants are encouraged to contact Network members prior to submission of an application

to discuss activities and focus. There is scope for an applicant to have more than one mentor and from different Network institutions.

All applications should advance a clearly defined, discrete piece of research or policy-related activity, which will have an identifiable outcome(s) on completion of the funded component of the research. This can include: original research, policy analysis, or synthesis of knowledge.

## Eligibility

We invite academics as well as professionals (e.g. policy, media, etc.) to apply. The competition is open to all career stages. We will consider applications involving a Primary Investigator and Co-Investigator(s) from other institutions where there is clear justification.

## Costs

A clear breakdown of how the funds will be spent, up to a maximum of £14,000 must be provided.

Eligible costs to cover the direct expenses incurred in planning, conducting, and developing the research/activity, include:

- project planning and development costs (cost of travel for discussion; initial workshops with potential partners)
- travel and maintenance costs; including travel to disseminate results of the research at workshops/conferences held either in the UK or abroad
- research assistance (based in UK or abroad)
- small consumables required for research purposes
- costs of interpreters in the field

Payment will be made on receipt of acceptable reports of expenditure.

Request for the **cost of child or parent care** can be considered if the carer is conducting research away from home and it is not possible to make alternative arrangements. The costs of normal regular childcare whilst at home are not eligible for support.

## Ethics of research activity

Applicants will be responsible for ensuring they receive relevant ethical approval for any research activity from their home institution. This should be confirmed with the Network at least 4 weeks prior to any research activity being carried out.

Applicants must also submit their institutional ethics application and approval to the Network's Ethics Committee ([ethics-polarities@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-polarities@contacts.bham.ac.uk)), which is designed to support and enable cross-institutional research. You are responsible for following the data management procedures at your host institution. If your research involves processing personal data, it is important to consider any additional actions you may need to take to comply with privacy legislation, such as the GDPR or the 2018 Data Protection Act. We may seek additional information/clarification following a review of your institutional ethics application.

The Network requires the research it funds to be conducted in an ethical manner. The following considerations apply to all proposals: accurate reporting of findings; fair dealing in respect of other researchers and their intellectual property; proper employment conditions for research staff having respect for the provisions of the 'Concordat for Contract Research Staff' and subsequent amendments; honesty to research staff and students about the purpose, methods and intended and possible use of the research and any risks involved; confidentiality of the

information supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents (unless otherwise agreed with research subjects and respondents); and independence and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research.

Additionally, proposals may raise one or more of the following considerations:

- The involvement of human participants.
- The involvement of human remains (e.g. traceable to living descendants).
- The use of non-human animals.
- Destructive analysis of historic artefacts.
- Research that may result in damage to the natural or historic environment.
- The use of sensitive social, economic or political data.

Wherever necessary, applicants should secure appropriate consent from or on behalf of participants or others affected by the research. Applicants should indicate whether their proposed research raises any special ethical issues. Applicants without access to formal ethical scrutiny and approval should describe any special ethical issues and explain how they will be addressed on the application form.

## Application process

Application deadline: **17 January 2025 (5pm UK time)**

Mandatory attachments include:

### 1. Application form

Note that the applicant (Primary Investigator in case of a team application) must commit to attend the following core activities during the year. Costs to support travel and accommodation for these events will be provided by the Network and do not need to be included in the breakdown of costs:

- Welcome Event (UK) – late April/early May
- Main Workshop event (Manchester, UK) – 30 June-1 July 2025

### 2. Applicant CV (no more than 2 sides of A4)

The CV must show the date the PhD was awarded or the scheduled date for the viva voce (for academic applicants)\*, brief details of education to date, any awards received for work or training, employment history, conference papers or publications, and any other relevant information for the proposed project.

\*We will also consider applications from those who have passed their viva but are awaiting their formal degree ceremony.

Both the application form and CV should be emailed to: [polarities@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:polarities@contacts.bham.ac.uk) (Martha Holmes) by 5pm (UK time) on the deadline date.

## Assessment of applications

Each application will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Fit to the overall Network regional focus, priority theme for that year, and main organising themes
- Research activities and proposed outputs, including overall relevance and coherence of the work, as well as feasibility of the proposed research
- Ethical considerations
- Value for money

Incomplete applications or applications outside the scope of the scheme will not be considered. The decision of the assessment committee is final.

## Timeline

- Call announced – December 2024
- Closing dates for applications – 17 January 2025
- Decisions confirmed to applicants – Late January/early February 2025
- Projects commence – between 1 April 2025 and 1 May 2025

## Network organising themes

This Network Plus brings together interdisciplinary, comparative and policy-facing approaches, structured around the **four** following organising themes.

**Orders:** Understanding *order* in a broad sense - including both institutionalised organisations and implicit constellations of patterned practices and norms. Where are we seeing existing forms of order eroded or replaced? What new orderings — informal or formal—are we seeing emerge? To what extent are we witnessing a resurgence of spheres of influence? What norms—liberal, illiberal, or otherwise—do emerging orderings embody? What issues are they tackling, and which problems are being left unaddressed? How are relations in the region being organised, and what does this mean for future trends?

**Interactions:** Interactions can take many forms—diplomatic, economic, legal, social, digital etc. Some are intentional and structured, others organic and inadvertent. What impact, for example, are interactions within the region having on the domestic politics of the states involved? How are movements of people or goods shaping regional relations and dependencies? How are transborder environmental effects shaping relations?

**Anxieties:** What are regional actors concerned about? What risks and dangers are considered most pressing? What fears/concerns are shaping domestic political environments or international political behaviours? Looking at a range of domains—security, environmental, economic, demographic etc—what issues represent salient concerns for regional actors?

**Implications:** What are the implications of the above for the UK? And, for the wider region and its inhabitants?

## Mentor contacts for each institution

The contacts listed below will be able to put the applicant in touch with relevant individuals to discuss their application.

- **Institute of Development Studies (IDS)** – James Georgalakis, [j.georgalakis@ids.ac.uk](mailto:j.georgalakis@ids.ac.uk); Lewis Husain, [l.husain1@ids.ac.uk](mailto:l.husain1@ids.ac.uk)
- **University of Birmingham** – John Round, [j.round@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.round@bham.ac.uk)
- **University of Glasgow** – Luca Anceschi, [luca.anceschi@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:luca.anceschi@glasgow.ac.uk)
- **University of Manchester** – Elena Barabantseva, [e.v.barabantseva@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:e.v.barabantseva@manchester.ac.uk)
- **University of Oxford** – Paul Chaisty, [paul.chaisty@politics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:paul.chaisty@politics.ox.ac.uk); Todd Hall, [todd.hall@politics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:todd.hall@politics.ox.ac.uk)
- **Ukrainian Catholic University** – Volodymyr Turchynovskyy, [volodymyr.turchynovskyy@ucu.edu.ua](mailto:volodymyr.turchynovskyy@ucu.edu.ua)
- **Colgate University** - Jessica Graybill, [jgraybill@colgate.edu](mailto:jgraybill@colgate.edu)
- **Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)** – Neil Melvin, [neilm@rusi.org](mailto:neilm@rusi.org)