Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship 2026

Updated 13 October 2025

1. Background

The Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowships are three-year research Fellowships awarded by the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS). Their purpose is to enable outstanding early career scientists (defined as having obtained a recognized PhD degree, or equivalent, after 1 October 2023) to study and research an astronomical subject. The Fellowship must be based at a recognised research establishment in the UK and the recipient must therefore have the right to work in the UK.

2. Eligibility of the applicant

To be eligible to apply for a Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship you must:

- have a recognized PhD degree (or equivalent) obtained after 1 October 2023 or have successfully taken a 'viva' examination by 23:59 UTC Saturday, 15 November 2025 and expect to be awarded a PhD degree by Thursday, 1 October 2026.
- be able to demonstrate that you have the right to live and work in the United Kingdom.
- have the approval of a recognised research establishment based in the UK that has agreed to host the Fellowship (known as the Host Institution).
- be able to commence study no later than 1 April 2027.

The Royal Astronomical Society is committed to inclusivity and welcomes applicants from all backgrounds including members of under-represented groups.

3. Eligibility of the Host Institution

Host Institutions must be a recognised research establishment based in the United Kingdom and can include universities and other not-for-profit research active institutions.

Host Institutions may support multiple Fellowship *applications*, but only one RAS research Fellowship may be held at the same institution at any one time (see Appendix I for details of currently active Fellowships). The Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship is classified as an RAS Fellowship for this purpose.

Fellowships are not transferable between organisations except under exceptional circumstances with the explicit consent of the Council of the RAS.

4. Value and payment of the award

The RAS will fund the Fellowship on the University and College Union (UCU) single pay spine from points 30 to 36 inclusive. If the Host Institution, as employer, wishes to pay at spine points above 36, the extra expenditure must be found from their own funds.

The RAS will only accept claims for Employers National Insurance at normal rates and the employer pension contribution at the prevailing Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) rate.

If the host institution wishes to pay above this, the extra expenditure must be found from their own funds.

Payment for absence through illness or other causes will be subject to the Host Institution's conditions of employment. The Society will compensate the Host Institution at the level equivalent to statutory payments; if the Host Institution, as employer, wishes to make payments above this level the extra expenditure must be found from their own funds. The Society accepts no liability for any illness, injury or accident which occurs during the period of your Fellowship. RAS Research Fellows are not employees of the RAS and are not covered by the RAS's staff policies.

Fellowships are administered by the Host Institution and so Income Tax, National Insurance and, where appropriate, any personal contribution to USS will be deducted at source.

A further £2,000 per annum may be claimed for costs incurred in attending meetings and conferences or for other items related to the research.

The Fellowship will fund only directly incurred costs, and not overheads (including bench fees or 'Full Economic Costs').

5. Duration of award and start date

Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowships are awarded for a period of three-years. This Fellowship should begin on 1 October 2026 (or no more than 6 months after this date).

The RAS will support breaks in service that the Host Institution, as the employer, is legally obligated to allow and will consider supporting breaks in service for other reasons in exceptional circumstances. If approved, the RAS will fund the Fellowship until such a time as the RAS has expended the equivalent of three years' financial support as outlined in section 4 above.

The RAS will consider requests for part-time working arrangements; the request must be supported by written confirmation from the line manager and Department Head at the Host Institution that that this will not adversely impact the delivery of the research undertaken as part of the Fellowship. Again, if approved, the RAS will fund the Fellowship until such a time as the RAS has expended the equivalent of three years' financial support as outlined in section 4 above.

6. Application process

Applications are accepted only via the online form and must be certified by the Department Head, countersigned by the Administrative Officer, of the Host Institution.

Completed applications must be submitted by 23:59 UTC, 15 November 2025

It is planned to make offers by mid-February 2026.

7. Reporting and research outputs

The recipients of Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowships are expected to publish original research results in the journals of the RAS. Any publications arising from the Fellowships should acknowledge funding from the RAS.

Continued funding in years two and three is contingent on submission of satisfactory interim reports (1500-2000 words in length) at the end of year one and year two of the Fellowship. These should provide a factual summary of the work you have carried out to date, including results, and should outline research planned for the remainder of the award. A short final report, including a list of any publications and manuscripts in press or under review, should be submitted no later than three months before the termination of the award.

8. Termination of Award

A Fellowship may be terminated where the progress or conduct of the recipient is judged to be unsatisfactory by the Council of the RAS. If the recipient of a Fellowship discontinues their research or takes up other employment before the end of the award, the RAS must be informed immediately.

9. Selection process

Applications for the Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship will be competitively assessed by an Awards Panel chaired by one of the RAS Vice-Presidents.

Selection will be based on capability, achievement and promise as well as the research proposal.

Appendix I – Current recipients of RAS Research Fellowships

Name	Institution	Research	Dates
Dr Vishnu Varma Vejayan	University of Keele	From α to Ω: Exploring Magnetic Fields in the Lives and Death of Massive Stars	March 2026 -
Dr Chris Osbourne	University of Glasgow	Unifying Solar Non-Equilibrium Radiative Transfer and Magnetohydrodynamic Models	October 2023 -
Dr Rebecca Smethurst	University of Oxford	Co-evolution cracked: the contribution of non-merger processes to supermassive black hole growth	October 2022 -

Name	Institution	Research	Dates
Dr Cyrielle Opitom	University of Edinburgh	Cometary Ices and the Role of Coma Evolution: Understanding	November 2020- December 2021
Dr Thomas Collett	University of Portsmouth	Fundamental Physics with gravitational lensing	March 2020 - March 2021
Dr Matt Nicholl	University of Edinburgh/ University of Birmingham	Superluminous supernovae: a comprehensive observational & theoretical study of nature's brightest fireworks	October 2018 – September 2021
Dr Amy Gilligan	University of Aberdeen	When subduction stops: understanding tectonic process in post- subduction settings	October 2018 - September 2021
Dr Vinesh Maguire Rajpaul	University of Cambridge	Transforming the search for Earth- like planets with advanced modelling tools	October 2017 - September 2020
Dr Elisa Chisari	University of Oxford	Accurate Astrophysics for the Next Era of Cosmology	October 2017 - September 2020
Dr Joanna Eberhardt (nee Barstow)	UCL	Nature vs Nurture: the effect of stellar irradiation on atmospheric evolution	October 2016 - September 2019
Dr Peter Wyper	Durham University	Explaining the Onset of Explosive Magnetic Reconnection in the in the Solar Corona & its Links to the Generation of Solar Energetic Particles	October 2016 - September 2019
Dr Ben Rozitis	Open University	Probing solar system processes using extreme asteroids	March 2016 - February 2019
Dr Emma Chapman	Imperial College London	Detecting and constraining the Epoch of Reionisation using foreground removal and state-of-the-art simulations	October 2015 - December 2018
Dr David J E Marsh	Kings College London	Precision cosmology of axions and moduli	October 2015 - December 2017
Dr Rowan Smith	University of Manchester	Uniting theory and observations of star-formation	September 2014- September 2017
Dr Richard Parker	Liverpool John Moores University	The Origin of the Galactic Field	March 2014 - March 2017
Dr John Armitage	Royal Holloway, University of London	Deciphering the sedimentary record: tectonic vs climate change	September 2013 - August 2016
Dr Sarah Badman	University of Leicester / Lancaster University	The Goldilocks hypothesis of planetary magnetospheres: discovering a balance between internally- and externally-driven	March 2013 - February 2016

		dynamics at Jupiter, Mercury and Saturn	
Dr Caitriona Jackman	University College London / University of Southampton	Energy Release from Magnetospheres	January 2013 - December 2013
Dr Nick Wright	University of Hertfordshire	The Dynamics of Young Star Clusters	October 2012 - September 15
Dr Baojiu Li	University of Durham	Cosmology, Dark Energy Theories (Theoretical, Phenomenolgical, Numerical & Statistical Studies)	February 2012 - January 2015
Dr Adam Christopherson	University of Nottingham	Constraining the Universe using Non-Linear Cosmological Perturbation Theory	October 2011 - September 2014
Dr Aline de Almeida Vidotto	University of St Andrews	Interaction between Exoplanets and the Winds of their Host Stars (Numerical Modelling & Magnetic Shield)	October 2011 - September 2014
Dr Thomas Kitching	University of Edinburgh	High Precision Dark Universe Cosmology with 3D Gravitational Lensing	January 2011 - September 2011
Dr Benjamin Davies	University of Cambridge / Liverpool John Moores	Mapping the Star- Forming History of Galaxies	November 2010 - October 2013
Dr Mark Swinbank	Durham University	Spatially Resolved Studies of Young Galaxies	October 2008 – September 2011
Dr Roberto Trotta	University of Oxford	Precision cosmology and astrophysics with CMB and other data sets	April 2005 – March 2008
Dr Jane Greaves	Royal Observatory Edinburgh	Searching for the signatures of extrasolar planets	October 2001 – September 2004
Dr Clare Parnell	University of St Andrews	How does the Solar Magnetic Carpet Heat the Corona?	October 1998 – September 2001
Dr Alastair Rucklidge	University of Cambridge	Convection in Sunspots	October 1995 – September 1998
Dr Iossif Lapidus (deceased)	University of Cambridge	n/a	December 1992 - December 1995