



Royal
Astronomical
Society

RAS SUPPORT FOR EARLY CAREER SCIENTISTS

Grants

Our grants scheme, prizes and fellowships are just some of the ways the RAS is committed to supporting postgraduates and postdoctoral researchers working in astronomy, geophysics and space science.

Any Fellow of the RAS can apply for funds from the Society and the eligibility criteria and application process are set out on our website. <http://ras.ac.uk/awards-and-grants/grants-for-studies>

Grants are available in the following categories:

- Activities relating to the history of astronomy and geophysics
- Conference/Meeting Travel Subsistence
- Instrumentation - RAS Tomkins awards
- Meeting Organising Funding
- Study or Research Projects
- Observing/Field Trips including E.A. Milne Travelling Fellowship
- jAG/RAS Summer School Bursaries (£500)
- Undergraduate Bursaries (£1500)
- Education & Outreach Grants

Bursaries awarded in 2025

The RAS awarded sixteen undergraduate bursaries for students to work on projects at various institutes in the UK. Projects included 'Dating the Universe using the oldest Galactic stars' at the University of Portsmouth. 'The relationship between optical and UV radiation in flares' at the University of Glasgow. 'Exploring missing physics in supermassive black hole growth' at the University of Southampton and 'Building a web App to interactively model panchromatic resolved observations of distant galaxies' at the University of Bath.

Seven students were awarded bursaries to attend the 2025 jAG/RAS (junge Astronomische Gesellschaft) Summer School at the Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics in Potsdam.

Grants awarded in 2025 included:

- Grant Support for Los Alamos Space Weather Summer School Attendance
- Travel support to attend the joint GR24 and Amaldi16 meeting
- Funding to attend in-person the European Space Weather Week in Sweden in October 2025
- Meeting Organising funding for 'Galactic and Extragalactic Astrophysics: 10th Anniversary of the E.A. Milne Centre for Astrophysics at the University of Hull'
- Meeting Organising funding for 'SPINS-UK 2025 Conference (Science Possibilities In Neutron Stars in the UK)'
- Funding for History of Astrochemistry Meeting

Awards

The Society presents several awards, medals and prizes as part of its remit to support and encourage scientists working in the fields of astronomy and geophysics. Some are aimed at young scientists, while others recognise many years of dedicated service to our sciences.

Thesis Prizes

The Society awards annual prizes of £1000 (£50 book tokens for runners up) for the best PhD theses in astronomy (the Michael Penston Prize) and geophysics and solar system science (the Keith Runcorn Prize). The 2025 winners were Dr Thomas Baycroft (University of Birmingham) and Dr Hannah Sanderson (University of Oxford). The RAS also awards an annual prize of £1000 for the best PhD theses in instrumentation science for astronomy and geophysics (the Patricia Tomkins Prize) the most recent winner was Dr Justin Tabbett (University of Bristol). Winners are invited to present their work at one of the Highlights meetings at Burlington House.

Early Career Awards

The Early Career Awards of £1000 each are given annually for research by postdoctoral researchers during the first 5 years following their PhD. Established in 2010 and previously known as the Winton Award, the latest winners were Dr Deaglan Bartlett (University of Oxford) and Dr Ke Zhu (University of Bristol).

Fowler Prizes

The annual Fowler Prizes for astronomy and geophysics mark the achievements of early career researchers with an award of £500. The prize is awarded to individuals who have made a particularly noteworthy contribution to astronomy (including emerging areas), within 10 years of completing their PhD. The latest winners were Dr Ingrid Pelisoli (University of Warwick) and Dr Paula Koelemeijer (University of Oxford).

Research Fellowships

The RAS funds several schemes for promising young scientists to be employed as Research Fellows at UK universities. The Royal Astronomical Society Research Fellowship and the Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship will each be available every three years. The purpose of the fellowships is to enable outstanding candidates to pursue research in the UK in the disciplines advanced by the RAS i.e. astronomy, solar system science, geophysics and closely related branches of these sciences.

The current RAS Research Fellows are Vishnu Vejayan (University of Keele) and Rebecca Smethurst (University of Oxford). Previous holders of the fellowship include Thomas Collett (Portsmouth) Amy Gilligan (Aberdeen), Matt Nicholl (Edinburgh), Elisa Chisari (Oxford), Mark Wyper (Central Lancashire), Jo Eberhardt (UCL), Emma Chapman (Imperial), Ben Rozitis (OU), David Marsh (Kings College London), Ben Davies (Cambridge), Catriona Jackman (UCL), Tom Kitching (Edinburgh), Baojiu Li (Cambridge), Sarah Badman (Leicester), Nick Wright (Hertfordshire), Aline de Almeida Vidotto (St Andrews), Richard Parker (LJMU) and John Armitage (Royal Holloway).

The current Sir Norman Lockyer Fellows are Dr Willem Elbers (Durham) and Dr Pooneh Nazari (Cambridge). Previous incumbents include Cyrielle Opitom (Edinburgh) Vinesh Maguire Rajpaul (Oxford), Rowan Smith (Manchester), Adam Christopherson (Nottingham), Mark Swinbank (Durham), Roberto Trotta (Oxford), Jane Greaves (UK-ATC) and Clare Parnell (St Andrews).

RAS Specialist Discussion Meetings:

These regular meetings are held on the second Friday of the month, normally in the RAS and Geological Society lecture theatres (both at Burlington House, London). All 2026/27 meetings will be hybrid. The meetings are free to attend for Fellows and there is a reduced cost of £5 for non-fellows Online and £15 In Person tickets. Talks ranging from Galactic magnetic fields, cosmic dust, forecasting Solar energetic particles and space weather.

Specialist discussion meetings are followed by the A&G ('Astronomy & Geophysics') Highlights meeting, which have more diverse programmes of talks, at a level accessible to a general audience of scientists (and advanced amateurs). Topics covered last year included:

- Space-weather science from the fifth Lagrange point
- Ocean Bottom Geophysics: Progress and Perspectives
- Exploring extreme stellar populations and initial mass function in the Universe: Bridging Observations and Theory from Low to High Redshifts
- How can A.I help us find exploding stars and hungry black holes
- How Do Massive Stars Live and Die?
- Environmental and Agricultural Geophysics
- Early Science with Euclid Q1

- Fire and Fury: Volcano Diplomacy in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
 - AGN-Driven Multiphase Outflows: Towards Consensus Between Theory and Observation
 - UKIArray: Geophysically instrumenting the UK and Ireland
 - Through Time and Space: 350 Years of the Royal Observatory Greenwich
- Meetings are open to all, with free admission.