

*The Civic Future
Fellowship:*
programme overview



Dear Prospective Fellow,

The quality of people entering into public life is crucial for Britain's future success. We believe it is imperative to attract more talented people and prepare them for public roles. It is our belief that for too long, our public institutions have failed to grasp the serious challenges our society faces, distracted by the wrong issues and struggling to get beyond short-term crises. In many people's eyes, there is a sense of stagnation and dysfunction in too much of public life and politics which cannot go on.

Fixing this is a complex project, but part of the solution is encouraging more highly talented people to enter into public life in the first place. This is what our Fellowship aims to do. We believe that preparation and learning is essential if these people - whether in party politics, the civil service, media, culture, or major institutions - are to be as effective as they can be.

If you are accepted as a Fellow you will have your thoughts challenged, your ideas contested, and your knowledge stretched. We hope it will be a transformative and enriching experience.

Our Fellows will be exposed to a variety of texts, themes, topics, and ideas that have been carefully selected to provide a broad and deep understanding of contemporary society and politics. They will participate in discussions about key issues, reflecting on how they can work to address major challenges facing Britain and the world.

Our long-term goal is to improve the quality of public leaders. To do that we want to ensure that those looking to enter public life are able to engage with complex ideas and the practical art of politics. We will give participants access to the best thinking and instruction, provided by a range of innovative and sometimes heterodox tutors and moderators at no cost to our Fellows. Our aim is to expand the horizons of British politics, in the search for both new talent and ideas.

We recognise that many prospective Fellows won't have prior experience of the topics and themes in our programme, and we certainly don't expect our Fellows to have all the answers already. The most important thing is to approach each session with an open and honest mind, and in a spirit of mutual support.

While the moderators will lead the sessions for each term, we expect the Fellows to do significant reading and thinking in advance and to participate in discussions. Lively conversation and debate are essential to making this an enjoyable and meaningful experience for everyone.

Of course, in a programme such as this one we can't offer everything. Therefore, we have prioritised topics and themes that offer a broad understanding of today's political challenges, and that bring together theory and practice – to ask not just 'how' policy can be implemented, but the ethics and morality of 'why'.

By the time Fellows have completed the programme, we hope they will have a deeper and richer understanding of our shared philosophical inheritance and the policy tools available, so that they can become truly effective in public life.

We look forward to reading your application.

With very best wishes,

Jack Hutchison

Programme Director, Civic Future




Outline of the year

The year will be separated into three terms, beginning in September 2023.

Each term will feature sessions held on a weekday evening, with ten sessions in total per term. The Fellowship is designed to be rich in content, with many topics covered over the year. That means the material read, watched or listened to between sessions is very important and a crucial part of the overall programme; the weekly sessions are an opportunity to discuss the texts in depth in a structured and guided setting.

Prior to the programme, a reading list will be distributed. Some Fellows without a background in economics will be asked to complete a short MOOC (massive open online course) so that they can start the course with a basic understanding of key concepts.





What does the Fellowship involve?

- The Fellowship is provided at no cost to participating Fellows
- Three ten-week terms, running from September 2023 to June 2024.
- The programme is designed to be conducted alongside a full-time job. We can also arrange full-time, paid, London-based professional work placements in relevant organisations for a select number of applicants.
- Terms will feature one evening session each week, on a weekday evening, lasting for between 90 minutes and two hours.
- Sessions will be led by subject area experts, mainly academics but also public intellectuals including writers, former diplomats and politicians, and others working in public life. Each term, a couple of sessions will be held over dinner.
- There will be around 20-50 pages of reading set for each week, depending on the difficulty of the material.
- There will be two residential weekends in the year.
- There will be a week-long overseas visit.

What is the content of the Fellowship?

Term 1

Liberalism and its Critics

September - December 2023

This first term explores the philosophical foundations of the idea we call 'liberalism', the worldview and governance philosophy of most modern developed democracies. We will also discuss the post-liberal ideas rising up to challenge it. The term will cover:

- Why liberalism is such a contested idea
- The historical roots and development of liberal ideas
- The relationship of liberalism to democracy, freedom, and authority
- The ideas rising up to challenge liberalism in the contemporary world

Term 2

Nations in the World

January - March 2024

The second term focuses on geopolitics and foreign policy, looking particularly at Britain's place in a complex and increasingly uncertain world. The term will cover:

- What geopolitics is and why it is important
- The role of the nation state in the post-Cold War order
- The major threats to British security and influence abroad
- A deep-dive into important areas of the world and their likely short, medium, and long-term futures, including the US, Europe, and China

Term 3

Britain: economy, state, and society

April - June 2024

The third term explores Britain, its recent past and likely future, as well as the policy tools available to those wishing to improve it. The term will cover:

- Britain's constitution and legal apparatus
- How political change actually happens: democracy, parties, and elites
- How the British economy can overcome stagnation and slow growth
- A deep dive into important policy areas and the challenge of reform: housing, health, immigration, and more



Residential weekends

There will be two residential weekends in the year.

The first will be held in September, and will feature an introduction to the programme as well as a discussion of extreme long-term risks such as pandemics, nuclear war, population decline, and artificial general intelligence.


The second will cover the practical aspects of public leadership: public speaking skills, communication, how to 'manage up' and 'manage down', as well as skills for senior leaders, including how to pull together and motivate high performance teams in high-pressure situations.

These skills will be used during a policy simulation challenge which will take place on a weekend, early in 2024.



Overseas visit

Fellows will also take part in an overseas trip during the year, seeing up close how an entirely different area of the world works: its state, its governance, its society, and its culture. The visit will be up to one week long. In order to allow Fellows to schedule time, we will confirm the dates once they are accepted onto the programme.



The Civic Future Fellowship application process



- The entire application process runs from February to June 2023.
- The process will run in two stages. The written application stage, in which applicants will have a number of questions to complete and submit via our online form. This written stage will be open for six weeks before the submission closes at 11:00 PM on 25 March 2023.
- The shortlisted applications from that pool will be invited to interview. Those interviews will take place in May.
- Final decisions will be made in June.
- We expect the application process to be competitive.

Details of session tutors will be provided to all successful Fellows in Summer 2023.

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FAQs:



Why is this programme needed?

It is widely acknowledged that Britain needs to widen and strengthen the talent pool for public life. The country is facing an unprecedented combination of significant social, security and economic challenges: from rebuilding the economy, to facing the rise of Chinese power, and dealing with the potential transformation of our working lives brought by artificial intelligence. Yet far from rising to the challenge, too much of the state apparatus is not working as it should. In many people's eyes, our public institutions are trapped in stagnation and dysfunction.

Civic Future aims to address this problem by encouraging more highly talented people to enter into British public life while preparing them for the challenge of improving it. In order to face the problems and opportunities of the future, our leaders can't be only good enough, they must be exceptional.

Is the programme for people with an allegiance to one particular political party?

No. We are non-party political. Our advisory board is made up of people from all three major parties and none. Civic Future team members are drawn from various political traditions. Our aim is not to work with people from any particular party, instead we want to train the next generation of effective and efficient public servants and people in public life.

However, we are committed to certain ideas which we think are important: those contained in a broadly understood liberal tradition. We value basic freedoms of association and of speech. We think that high trust, democracy, and a market-based economic approach are important. These values and ideas are not exclusive to any one of the major political parties.

Can you provide more information about the speakers or tutors for the programme?

Many of the tutors involved in the Fellowship teach at top universities. They will be subject area specialists, meaning that whatever the topic, the Fellows will be learning from some of the most qualified people in the country.

Many sessions will also be led by former practitioners: senior civil servants, diplomats, frontline politicians, and public intellectuals, ensuring a wide variety of content and perspectives on the programme.

What is the expected outcome of the programme for Fellows? Will Fellows be expected to pursue a career in public life after completing the programme, or can they go into any field with the skills they've learned?

We define public life broadly. Some Fellows might aspire to go into frontline politics, whereas others will want to work in the civil service, non-governmental organisations, think tanks, or perhaps in private companies that work closely with government. We expect everyone interested in the programme will be committed to improving public life in some way.

Are there any work placements or internships offered for Fellows?

The Fellowship is designed for people who are already in full-time work, but we can also help to organise full-time, paid, professional work placements in relevant organisations for a select number. Applicants should indicate in the application form if they are interested in this opportunity.

Are there any efforts made to ensure that the programme is representative of different backgrounds and experiences?

We expect each cohort of Fellows to come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and have a wide range of experiences. We're not just searching for very talented individuals, but individuals that will work together as a group. Some may not have gone to university, others may have PhDs.

We will bring people with these different perspectives and experiences together to have a full and deeply engaged discussion.

What does Civic Future's non-profit status mean?

At the moment we are funded by several generous philanthropists. We are currently applying for charitable status. Civic Future is not seeking any funding from government.

Can you provide more information about the residential events? How do they fit into the overall structure of the programme?

There will be two weekend residentials over the course of the year: one in September and the other in December. There will also be an overseas trip around Easter time in 2024. The weekend residentials will be held in locations outside London. All fellows will be expected to attend these and arrange any other commitments in advance to make this possible. They are an integral part of the programme.

Is the programme certified or accredited in any way? How is the Fellowship different from a traditional university experience?

The Fellowship is not formally accredited by a higher education institution, although we are working with a range of respected academics on the curriculum and teaching. It is important to emphasise that we hope people will participate in the Fellowship primarily because they value it as an enriching experience, rather than as a formal qualification for their CV.

Are the Fellowship seminars all in person?

The Fellowship seminars will all be held in person. We may occasionally invite an expert to give a lecture via video if they are based outside the UK. We think group interaction in person is important for building confidence and trust. We appreciate that most people don't live in London and that this may be a barrier. We may be able to arrange paid professional work placements for some Fellows, allowing them to move to London and work full-time in a relevant organisation whilst doing the programme. Applicants will be able to indicate an interest in this opportunity on the application form.

Will people be able to join the Fellowship even if they can't attend each session in person? Is there a hybrid option?

Unfortunately not. Our Fellowship sessions will all be in person. In future we may be able to expand to allow semi-remote attendance, but for now we're concentrating on what we can offer well, which is in-person meetings, however imperfect that may be.

We don't want anyone to be put off from applying because of where they live and in many cases will be able to cover travel and some accommodation expenses for those who live outside London. If you live outside London and would like to take part in the Fellowship, you should still apply.

What kind of support will Civic Future offer its Fellows once they've graduated from the course?

The main way we will support our Fellows is through our mentor programme. At the end of the Fellowship, participants will be offered the opportunity to take part in career sessions about public service opportunities, and be paired up with a senior mentor already working in public life. Our alumni will be invited to attend future conferences, dinners and events and expected to remain part of our wider community, helping and advising future Fellows.

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Civic Future
Public Hall
1 Horse Guards Avenue
London, SW1A 2HU

info@civicfuture.org

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