

The 2024/25 Civic Future Fellowship: programme overview



Dear Prospective Fellow,

The limits of the possible are too often defined by the edges of conventional wisdom. This is the case in British public life, where short-term gains eclipse long-term vision.

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. There is a 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. The quality of people entering into public life is crucial for Britain's future success. We need to encourage better, more capable people to negotiate and transform systems of governance, and drive Britain towards progress, prosperity, and abundance.

This is what our Fellowship aims to do: expand the horizons of British politics by searching for new talent and ideas. Preparation and learning is essential if people in public life - 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. We can arrange full-time, paid, London-based professional work placements in relevant organisations for a select number of successful applicants looking to move to London.

Our Fellows will be exposed to a variety of carefully selected texts, topics, and ideas that 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.

Of course, in a programme such as this 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. We focus on political philosophy, foreign policy, domestic policy, and practical skills.

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.

If you're a highly driven individual who desires to break Britain out of stagnation, then apply. It is easy to do so and the potential upside for you – and the country – is very high.

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 2024.

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. Fellows receive a small stipend to cover study costs.
- Three ten-week terms, running from September 2024 to June 2025.
- The programme is designed to accommodate people in full-time employment. 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 between 90 minutes and two hours.
- Sessions will be led by subject area experts, mainly academics but also writers, former diplomats and politicians, and others working in public life. There will be a couple of sessions 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*

October - December 2024

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 2025

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 2025

The third term explores Britain, its recent past and likely future, as well as key policy challenges. 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 an opportunity to hear from those who have worked at the very heart of government, asking two main questions: how is power won in British politics? And, once that power is won, how does successful political reform happen?

The second will cover the practical aspects of public leadership: public speaking skills, communication, problem-solving and motivating high performance teams in high-pressure situations.



Overseas visit

Fellows will take part in an overseas trip, 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 one week long and take place in Easter 2025. 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 application process runs from February to June 2024.
- 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 five weeks before the submission closes at 11:00 PM on 10 March 2024.
- The shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview in May.
- Final decisions will be made in June.
- We expect the application process to be competitive.

Details of the curriculum, readings and session tutors will be provided to all successful Fellows in Summer 2024.

[Click here to apply now](#)

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 China, and dealing with the potential impact of AI. 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 and prepare them for the challenge of improving it. In order to face the problems and opportunities of the future, our leaders must be more than 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?

We are a registered charity and are fortunate to be funded by a range of generous philanthropists, trusts and foundations. Civic Future does not seek any funding from the 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 residencies 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 2025. The weekend residencies 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.



***The 2024/25
Civic Future
Fellowship:***
programme overview

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