

The Wolfson Foundation

Press release

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Wolfson Foundation awards British Academy £10 million to boost the humanities and social sciences

The Wolfson Foundation and British Academy today announced a major initiative to promote and support high quality research in the humanities and social sciences across the UK.

It is the largest ever single grant awarded in the humanities and social sciences by the Foundation and will see the British Academy deliver a transformative programme to support early career researchers, and create an intellectual hub at the Academy's home on Carlton House Terrace in London.

The cornerstone of the initiative is the **Wolfson Fellowships for Global Engagement**, which aims to nurture the next generation of research leaders in the humanities and social sciences. The programme will give early career researchers freedom to focus on outstanding research and ensure it reaches a global audience.

The British Academy also intends to create the **Gladstone Institute**, a new network to enable early career researchers to collaborate, across subjects and institutions, to inform policy and practice beyond the academic world.

Alongside these initiatives, the British Academy will also undertake a significant enhancement of its facilities at its historic home in Carlton House Terrace, a Nash building previously home to Prime Minister William Gladstone. This will transform existing basement space into an intellectual hub, complete with a 200+ seat auditorium with in-built AV facilities, exhibition and networking space, and a state-of-the-art media suite. This will allow the Academy to expand its events programme, bringing the humanities and social sciences to a wider public audience.

This announcement builds on a longstanding partnership between the two organisations, recognising and championing the importance of the humanities and social sciences to British society. This new initiative comes at a challenging and uncertain time for academics in British higher education. Both the Wolfson Foundation and the British

Academy are committed to the ongoing support of the UK's leading academic talent, and to encouraging a global outlook – both in the content of research and in forging links with an international community of experts.

Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Foundation said, “We feel strongly that support for high quality research in the humanities and social sciences is crucial for a healthy society. We are delighted to be working in partnership with the British Academy and hope that this investment will be seen as a mark of confidence in research at British universities. There could be no more important moment to support the next generation of researchers and to emphasise that UK universities are flourishing, global institutions.”

Alun Evans, Chief Executive of the British Academy said, “This is an incredibly exciting initiative – for both the British Academy and the humanities and social sciences as a whole. We are hugely grateful. It's a real show of support coming from such a prestigious and discerning funder, with a track record of nurturing the very best thinking wherever it is found.”

Dr Rachael Wiseman, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Liverpool who received early-career funding from the British Academy said, “The funding and networking opportunities the British Academy facilitates through schemes like the one announced today make all the difference for early career researchers in the humanities and social sciences. For me, they have been a vital stepping stone between my post-graduate work and my first permanent lectureship, and key to engaging policy makers and the public with my research. I am now part of a team of researchers at University of Liverpool who have a residency in NHS-Northwest to look at professional and personal integrity in end-of-life care: this would not have happened without the support provided by the British Academy.”

Professor Mary Beard FBA, Professor of Classics, University of Cambridge said, “This is a truly excellent initiative. It's a very welcome recognition that the humanities and social sciences are not simply the icing on the academic cake, but absolutely essential to the intellectual, cultural and political health of the country. I am sure William Gladstone — who was an expert on Homer as well as being Prime Minister -- would be delighted that what was once his house was being used in this way”.

Paul Nurse, Director, The Francis Crick Institute said, “As former President of the Royal Society, I know that our pursuit to better understand the world and its challenges requires insights from physical sciences, humanities, and social sciences in equal measure. It also depends on nurturing the brightest early career academics and helping them engage a wider audience with their research. This is an exciting and transformative

project and I look forward to seeing how the Wolfson Foundation and British Academy will work together to benefit the health and wellbeing of society for the future.”

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Notes to Eds

About the British Academy

The British Academy is the voice of the humanities and social sciences. The Academy is an independent fellowship of world-leading scholars and researchers; a funding body for research, nationally and internationally; and a forum for debate and engagement.

www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk.

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For further information and to interview Alun Evans, Chief Executive, please contact Naomi Joyner at the British Academy Press Office on n.joyner@thebritishacademy.ac.uk or 020 7969 5273.

About the Wolfson Foundation

The Wolfson Foundation (www.wolfson.org.uk) is an independent charity that supports and promotes excellence in the fields of science, health, education and the arts and humanities, including awarding the Wolfson History Prize, the UK’s foremost history prize.

Since it was established in 1955, over £900 million (£1.9 billion in real terms) has been awarded to more than 11,000 projects throughout the UK, all on the basis of expert review.

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For further information and to interview Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive, please contact the Wolfson Foundation Communications and Events Manager on Amanda.Thomson@wolfson.org.uk or 0207 323 5730 Ext 214