

Legacies of Enslavement - Call for proposals: Two research projects

The Legacies of Enslavement Special Initiative will support two research projects by supporting the employment costs of two Postdoctoral Research Associates (one for each selected project) for up to 2 years. The remit of these projects is wide, and proposed project can encompass historical work across any discipline, or research that addresses contemporary legacies and afterlives of systems of enslavement and forced labour.

Senior members of the University (i.e. at Assistant Professor level of equivalent) are invited to submit expressions of interest detailing their proposed project by 27 February 2026. Successful applicants will act as the PI and postdoctoral supervisor for the PDRA.

Further details are given below, and questions can be directed to the Convenor of the Legacies of Enslavement Initiative, Prof Pedro Ramos Pinto via legaciesnetwork@admin.cam.ac.uk

Further details

Following the initial work of the University's Legacies of Enslavement Advisory Group and the publication of its [Report](#) in 2022, the University is entering a new phase of its work addressing the topic of its connections with slavery and its legacies. Alongside publicly acknowledging the depth of the University's historical links to the slave trade and its human consequences, the University has made a commitment to continue exploring this history, but also to constructively deploy its resources to make a difference to the communities affected by the legacies of enslavement.

To this end, the Vice-Chancellor's Office has set up the Legacies of Enslavement Special Initiative (LoE) to develop and promote Legacies-related work across and beyond the collegiate University, with a view to creating an enduring base for Legacies-related work into the future. More details about the Special Initiative can be found [here](#).

As a next step the Special Initiative is now publishing a call for expressions of interest from Faculties/Departments for hosting two Early Career Fellowships to conduct research that will extend the Legacies work so far and support the Initiative's activities.

Legacies of Enslavement projects (x2)

This call invites established researchers in the University of Cambridge to propose projects in the broad field of Legacies of Enslavement. Funding will be allocated to two projects. Proposers will be the Principal Investigator and the funding allocated will support the appointment of one Post Doctoral Research Associate in each project for a period of two years. The remit of these projects is wide, encompassing

either historical work across any discipline, or research that addresses contemporary legacies and afterlives of systems of enslavement and forced labour. The criteria for selection will be the excellence of the selected project's contribution to knowledge; its feasibility within the timeframe; and its relationship to the objectives of the Legacies of Enslavement Initiative.

It is expected that one project will focus on aspects of the **historic connections between the Collegiate University and the institution of Atlantic Slavery and or other forms of coerced labour**. This could address themes ranging from further exploration of how the University and its disciplines were involved in the construction of racialised forms of knowledge, or developing legal theories and practices underpinning systems of enslavement; or research into the Universities collections (archival and material), their provenance and their relation to enslavement and exploitation; financial legacies connecting the University and its constituent parts to Slavery; how the Collegiate University and its members were involved in the development, justification and defence of the slavery system or other subsequent systems of coerced labour, such indentured labour, through the creation of, or by other relevant means. This work could for instance include research into and using the University's collections – archival, museological and otherwise.

Similarly, it is expected that one of the projects will explore **the afterlives and legacies of enslavement or other systems of forced labour that followed it**. This could, for instance, encompass research on the enduring effects of slavery on regions affected by it, in particular West Africa and the Caribbean, but also the legacies those of Black descent in the United Kingdom. It could also address questions of memorialisation, knowledge creation and contemporary representations of slavery. Alternatively it could explore the environmental, social and health afterlives of enslavement. The remit is wide and open to all disciplines of the University for either historical or contemporary-focused project, interdisciplinary and cross-department supervision is welcome, but the proposals must nominate a host Faculty/Department who will be responsible for integrating the Fellow in its research culture and provide such resources and facilities that would be allocated to an ECR of similar status.

Eligibility and conditions

The PI for each project is expected to be a senior member of the University (i.e. at Assistant Professor level or equivalent) whose contract will cover the period of employment of the Fellow working under their direction. PIs are expected to be at a level where they would be supervising postdoctoral researchers, even if this would be their first time doing so.

The PI will be expected to provide direction, support and mentoring for the Fellow working in their direction. The host Faculty or Department will be expected to provide the required equipment, workspace and access to training, funding and other support normally available to postdoctoral researchers in the institution.

The Legacies of Enslavement, via the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, will allocate the funds to cover the Fellow's salary costs in the host Faculty or Department, which will be responsible for the HR and payroll for the fellows.

The fellowships

Each appointment will run for two years from date of appointment, with appointments starting 1 October 2026 or as soon as possible after. Candidature is normally restricted to junior scholars, i.e. not more than five years past date of PhD submission. Candidates will be expected to have concluded their PhD by the start of the Fellowship. The fund will cover the salary costs of the Fellow on the Grade 7 scale, final appointment details will follow standard University processes at the recruitment stage. Once projects have been awarded, LoE Fellows will be appointed through open advertisement using normal Faculty and Department recruiting procedures.

The Fellows will be expected to **devote a part of their time (up to 10%) to working directly with the Legacies of Enslavement Special Initiative team** including the Convenor, the coordinator, the other Fellow, advisory board and working groups. Fellows will be expected to attend regular meetings and events of the Legacies of Enslavement Network, and should coordinate any periods of absence and leave with both their supervisor and the LoE convenor.

Selection of proposals

Selection of projects will be overseen by a panel on behalf of the Special Initiative, who will select applications from a competitive gathered field. The field is intentionally broad to elicit projects which will further the core values of the programme. The proposals will be evaluated by a panel according to the following criteria:

- Research excellence and contribution to knowledge.
- Contribution to the overall goals of the LoE Special Initiative.
- Quality of the supervision and career development support for the Fellow.

PIs wishing to host a project are asked to complete the accompanying application form. The full expression of interest should be no more than 3 sides of A4, covering the following points:

- Indicative research programme, with a clear line of independent inquiry for the postdoctoral fellow;
- Explanation of how this project will develop and/or expand the work of the Legacies of Enslavement Special Initiative, producing impactful scholarship
- How the research primarily fits the **historic connections** or the **afterlives** strands of research outlined above;
- Expected outcomes and outputs;
- Arrangements for mentoring and career development of the postdoctoral researcher;

Additionally the application should include:

- A letter of support from the PI's Chair of Faculty/Head of Department, including confirmation that reasonable workspace and other direct or indirect

resources necessary will be made available to the fellow by the Faculty or Department.

- An Academic CV (Maximum 4 pages) of the PI.

Expressions of interest should be sent to legaciesnetwork@admin.cam.ac.uk to arrive no later than **27 February 2026**. Any questions about the scheme should be directed to legaciesnetwork@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Indicative timeline

Stage 1: Call for project topics

Stage 2: Shortlist project topics

Stage 3: Advertise PDRA positions

Stage 4: Shortlist and interview

Notice to faculties & departments (LoE Coordinator)	By 30 January 2026
Deadline for submission of proposals(LoE Coordinator)	27 February 2026
Panel decision (LoE Convenor and Coordinator)	By 16 March 2026
Advertising of Fellowships (PI, Department and LoE)	By 30 April 2026
Shortlisting, interviews and decision (Department)	By 15 June 2026
Start of contract of employment	1 October 2026