Logo

Description automatically generatedBRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS’ UNION

[admin@bou.org.uk](mailto:admin@bou.org.uk) | **Tel** +44 (0)7485 385451 | [www.bou.org.uk](http://www.bou.org.uk)

Career Development BURSARIES

The aim of these bursaries is to support short-term research positions for young or early-career ornithologists, between a first and higher degree programme or within 6 months of completion of a higher degree. Successful proposals will combine the development of skills useful for a future career in ornithology with a sound scientific research proposal.

You should check the BOU’s [Small Research Grants](https://bou.org.uk/funding/small-research-grants/) scheme, which offers awards of £2,000 per project aimed at supporting small projects outright or part-funding medium-sized research programmes, in case this is a more appropriate source of funding for your project.

**Terms**

Bursary – the award provided for the career development programme

Bursary holder – the supervisor/sponsor of the applicant

Applicant – the person undertaking the career development programme

Specifics of the Career Development Bursary scheme are:

* Applicants must be a BOU ECR member.
  + Exception – those from, and still residing/working/studying in, a [low- or middle-income country](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf) (LMIC) can apply without being a BOU member
    - Note, those from a low- or middle-income country studying or working at an institute based in a country not on [this list](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf) must be a BOU member
* The bursary scheme is aimed at researchers intending to follow a career in ornithology and who wish to develop their skills between or after completion of a first or higher degree. Awards will not be given to projects that form part of a degree programme, or for expeditions.
* Up to £2500 will be provided to cover a period of career development lasting 6-10 weeks, during which a scientific research project will be conducted. The bursary award may include a weekly allowance for the participant and expenses. In exceptional circumstances, an award over this amount may be considered.
* Up to a further £2500 will be offered for visa and travel costs for applicants from [low- or middle-income countries](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf) who are currently based at an institute in a [low- or middle-income country](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf).
* Applicants must be between a first and higher degree programme or immediately after completion of a higher degree.
* Applicants must not be employed through other funding sources to undertake work that will be part of the career development programme.
* This award is for the applicant to undertake a programme of work that is not already funded, although the work may be linked to an existing research programme.
* The programme of work must be undertaken in a third-party institute, supervised by someone within that institute.
  + Projects cannot be undertaken within your home institute (i.e. any institute from which you have already received any degree or affiliated institute).
* Research projects should be developed with a professional research group (in a university, NGO or government agency) and be supported by a nominated supervisor from that group who will act as sponsor for the applicant. Projects can be stand-alone or can complement existing work.
* Only one application should be submitted by a supervisor in each funding round and no more than two awards will be made to the same institution each year.
* The timing of projects is flexible according to the needs of the research, but projects should be completed within a year of receipt of the award.
* Projects can focus on any aspect of ornithology and will be judged on their scientific quality (including a clearly defined objective that is achievable within the time available), their training/career development potential, their scope for thought and initiative by the applicant (i.e. not using the applicant as a research assistant), the track record of the applicant, the suitability of the nominated supervisor and the likely degree of support and contact between the supervisor and the applicant. Proposals that tie in with and add value to existing projects are encouraged, because they may offer more reliable scientific quality and opportunities for skill development. We also encourage proposals which are outside the applicant’s usual research interests and/or would see the applicant moving to/working with an institute or in a research environment different to their existing/former affiliations.
* Applications are made using the form below, but should also include brief CVs as separate documents of both the supervisor and the applicant. The supervisor should submit the application and act as the point of contact with the BOU.
* Proposals must be submitted by 31 October. Applications will be considered by the BOU Grants Committee and their recommendations approved by BOU Council. Decisions will be communicated to both the supervisor and applicant by the end of the following March.
* Awards are paid out from March. Payment will be made no more than two months before the project is due to take place.
* Awards are offered to the institution (university, NGO or government agency), not the supervisor or applicant, and the institution must signify its willingness to administer the award without making administrative charges. The supervisor, applicant and head of the institution must agree to the conditions of the award.
* Awards are given on the understanding that the research project complies with the safety and ethical regulations of the institution and that the institution will ensure that the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities will be met before the project begins.
* Applications are welcomed from all countries.
* Applicants must undertake their research project outside/away from their home institute (i.e. current place of study/work or where they studied for any degree).

**Conditions of a Career Development Bursary Award**

The BOU is a charity (249877 (England and Wales), SC044850 (Scotland)) and the bursary scheme provides charitable investment in human capital and research capacity, rather than funding a particular project. It covers only the bursary cost of the research carried out and does not meet the full economic cost of the research.

1. Bursaries are to be used solely for the purpose of the award as stated in the application and described in the letter of the award.

2. The bursary holder is responsible for the conduct of the applicant and the work undertaken, including abiding by the BOU’s ethical policy. The institution administering the award is responsible for the applicant and for providing appropriate facilities for the career development programme, including financial management.

3. The bursary holder must ensure that all facilities, agreements about access and collaborations for the research are obtained before the career development programme commences and can be ensured for the duration of the bursary period. The bursary holder must also ensure that any ethical approvals, animal licences and other requirements from regulatory authorities are approved before the career development programme begins. Research that may be part of the programme must be conducted in an ethical manner. The application should address any ethical issues. Where necessary, research must be carried out under appropriate licences.

4. Any financial support for the project obtained from other sources must be declared.

5. The BOU should be informed immediately if the bursary holder or applicant is unable to take up the bursary.

6. The BOU reserves the right to terminate an award if the bursary holder or applicant being funded is in breach of any of the conditions of the award or is unable to pursue the career development programme funded by the bursary.

7. Bursaries are paid in advance by BACS/bank transfer payable to the host institution.

8. BOU career development bursaries are exempted from income tax under section 776 of the (UK) Income Tax (Trading and Income) Act 2005: the main purpose of the bursaries is learning, not employment, and so we understand that the bursaries produce no UK National Insurance liability.

9. The bursary holder must ensure that a final report (up to 1000 words) is submitted to the BOU. This report should include: (i) a summary paragraph, for the lay reader, describing the career development programme and its outcome; (ii) an account by the applicant of the programme and an assessment of the outcome as an article suitable as a post for the BOU blog; (iii) the applicant’s comments on their experience of the bursary; (iv) a list of publications arising from any research; (v) comments on the value of the bursary to the bursary holder’s research group; (vi) a financial statement confirming that no balance remains. The BOU reserve the right to publish reports.

10. An award cannot be transferred to a third party. If the recipient is unable to complete the project for which the award was made, or is unable to undertake the project in the timescale agreed (i.e. as detailed in their application), then the award must be returned in full.

11. At the end of the bursary any outstanding balance over £50 should be returned to the BOU.

12. If any formal publication arises wholly or partly from the bursary, the BOU’s contribution must be acknowledged appropriately and a PDF copy of the publication sent to the BOU. The BOU must also be acknowledged in any presentations or media coverage that draw on the career development work.

13. If the BOU is not satisfied that the funds it has awarded have been spent as per the application for which funding was sought, or an adequate report has not been submitted to us, then the BOU reserves the right to request for the award, in part or in full, to be returned.

14. The bursary holder should archive data in an appropriate manner.

15. Applicants must be an ECR member of the BOU or from and residing in a [low- or middle-income country](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf).

Application form below**BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS’ UNION**

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## Career development bursaries

### **APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Please read the associated guidelines carefully and complete all fields:

Applicant details inc. an outline (shortened) CV

Supervisor/sponsor details (the bursary holder)

Career development programme and research project details

Finances

Declarations

Applications are for awards made in March 2026 for projects running between 01 April 2026 and 31 March 2027. Applications for projects taking place outside this period will not be considered.

Closing date for applications: 31 October 2025.

Awards will be made up to eight weeks in advance of the project start date.

ABOUT THE BOU

The BOU is an international charitable society whose aim is promote ornithological science across the international scientific community, support the individuals who contribute to that science, and grow understanding of that science among a wider community. The provision of grants and bursaries for ornithological research is a small part of how we achieve our aims. To see how we further achieve our aims please visit our website at [www.bou.org.uk](http://www.bou.org.uk).

Please complete the fields below by overtyping the xxx in each of the relevant boxes.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Replace all xxx text in this form by overtyping with your own text.

**Project Title:**

xxx

**Dates the project will run:**

xxx

**Total project budget:** £ xxx

**Amount requested from BOU:** £ xxx

career development programme DETAILS

**Project title:**

xxx

**Total applicant support required (number of weeks):**

xxx

**Institute at/with which the project will be undertaken:**

xxx

**Project summary and objectives (this should be in a form which can be copied to stand alone as a clear summary of the proposal)** **(max 250 words):**

xxx

**Methodology (summary - max 500 words):**

xxx

**Anticipated application and publication of results (max 200 words):**

xxx

**Research permits, licences and permissions (please detail all applied for and those obtained to date):**

xxx

**Reference list:**

Please list any references cited in your application here, rather than in the main body of your proposal.

**FINANCES**

The maximum award is £2500 for a 6-10 week project. Further funding of up to an additional £2500 is available for visa and travel costs for applicants from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC – detailed in [this list](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf)) who are based at an institute in an LMIC.

**Weekly Budget** £ xxx

**Number of weeks the programme will run** xxx

**Additional visa and travel costs (LMIC applicants only)** xxx

**Total amount requested from BOU** £ xxx

**Is the programme dependent on other funding?** YES / NO

**If yes, please provide details of other funds applied for or obtained** £ xxx

Bursaries are made payable to the institute via the programme supervisor/sponsor (bursary holder).

**Budget**

Please provide as detailed as possible breakdown on the budget. Fields below are not exhaustive. Add relevant fields applicable to your project and leave any of the below blank if not applicable.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Costs | Income | Income | Income |
| Provide additional information as necessary | Total project  costs | Requested from BOU | Other funds obtained | Other funds applied for |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Administration | £ xxx | Not funded | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Research permits/licences | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Equipment (itemise) | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Lab costs (itemise) | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| International transport | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Visa costs | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Local transport | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Insurance | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Accommodation | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
| Costs of field assistant(s) (provide daily rates) | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx | £ xxx |

APPLICANT DETAILS

**Name:** xxx

**Current position:** xxx

**Current institute and address:** xxx

**Email:** xxx

Only one email address will be used for all communications in relation to this application.

**Tel:** xxx

**BOU Member:** YES / NO

**Titles, dates and amounts of any previous awards received from BOU, and dates that reports were submitted:**

xxx

**LMIC applicant:** YES / NO

Applicants from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (detailed on [this list](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2025-flows.pdf)) who are based at an institute in an LMIC are eligible for additional funding to support visa and travel costs.

**Outline CV – applicant** Please provide a shortened summary detailing education, any relevant employment and publications (max. one page)

xxx

**Relevant experience of applicant.** Please highlight how your skills and experiences are relevant to the career development project. (max. half page)

xxx

**Statement of key skills that will be developed during this project (max 600 words):**

xxx

**Summary of career development goals. What do you hope to get out of the programme? (max 200 words):**

xxx

### **SUPERVISOR (BURSARY HOLDER) DETAILS**

**Name:** xxx

**Occupation/position:** xxx

**Institute:** xxx

**Email:** xxx

**Address:** xxx

**Tel:** xxx

**BOU Member:** YES / NO

**Titles, dates and amounts of any previous awards received from BOU, and dates that reports were submitted:**

xxx

**Outline CV – bursary holder** Please provide a shortened summary detailing education, any relevant employment and publications (max. one page)

xxx

DeclarationS

APPLICANT

I have read, understood and agree to the terms of the award:

Yes / No Date: xxx

I undertake to provide a report within one year of completion of the work and give my permission for this to be published.

Yes / No

Name: xxx

Supervisor/sponsor (bursary holder)

I accept the conditions of the award:

Yes / No Date: xxx

Name: xxx

Position: xxx

head of institute

I accept the conditions of the award:

Yes / No Date: xxx

Name: xxx

Position: xxx

Send your completed application by email only to [admin@bou.org.uk](mailto:admin@bou.org.uk).

All correspondence will be undertaken by email.

**Checklist**

* Have you met all conditions as outlined in the guidelines?
* Have you completed all sections?
* Have you included copies of any licences and permissions?
* Have you attached the CVs for both the applicant and bursary holder, including publication history?