



VENICE FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME
OPEN CALL FOR FELLOWS 2026

VENICE FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME

The [British Council](#) is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

The [Venice Fellowships Programme](#) is a key part of the British Council's presence in Venice, supporting the exhibition programme as well as being a platform for the development of new creative careers and future leaders. The Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for emerging creatives to represent the UK on an international level whilst broadening their perspective, making connections and developing their creative practice.

The Fellowships Programme enables creative students and professionals to spend a month in Venice during the world's most important art and architecture biennials. As exhibition ambassadors at the British Pavilion, the Fellows enrich and activate our exhibition programme. They engage visiting members of the public and expand the impact of the show. Alongside this practical residency, Fellows have the opportunity to develop their own research or practical creative projects and use the Biennale as a platform for artistic and professional development. Through these contributions, Fellows elevate the Pavilion to an important reference point for universities and creative organisations around the world.

The [61st International Art Exhibition](#) will take place at the Giardini and Arsenal, Venice, from Saturday 9 May to Sunday 22 November 2026 (pre-opening 6, 7, 8 May).

British Council has a total of sixty (60) places available for the 2026 Venice Fellowships programme. Fellows will be selected and divided into Travel Groups, travelling to Venice between the months of May and November.

Applications for the 2026 places are now open. Candidates must be enrolled or connected to a selected 2026 Programme Partner.

Please see the Guidance Notes for more details and a link to the Application Form.



'The Fellowships Programme was a hugely significant part of my personal and professional growth; creating a springboard into my career which I will always be thankful for. Being surrounded by the energy of the Venice Biennale inspired me to challenge myself by undertaking the opportunities that were presented during this period. Engaging with the British Council created a foundation to take a step forward and realise my potential in the art world. It is a truly a programme that allows you to get out what you put into it!'

Past Fellow

'The Venice Fellowship has allowed my creative world to expand. Collaborating with artists of many disciplines was an invaluable experience.'

Past Fellow



'This was an incredible opportunity that helped me develop a network and better understand my practice.'

Past Fellow

2026 BRITISH PAVILION EXHIBITION

The world-renowned British artist, Lubaina Himid RA, CBE (b. 1954, Zanzibar), will represent Great Britain and deliver a major solo exhibition of new work at the British Pavilion.

Known for a pioneering practice which addresses themes of race, history, feminism, cultural memory and identity, Lubaina Himid frequently employs storytelling and historical research to challenge dominant Eurocentric narratives and highlight the overlooked contributions of Black figures in Western history.

Himid lives and works in Preston, UK, and is Emeritus Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire. One of the pioneers of the Black British Art Movement, Himid curated several significant exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Five Black Women* (1983) at the Africa Centre, London and *The Thin Black Line* (1985) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, both of which showcased the work of Black female artists in response to their exclusion from mainstream galleries. In 2017, Himid was awarded the Turner Prize and in 2018 she received the honorary title of CBE for her contributions to the arts.

“Himid pushes the boundaries of painting practice through sound and sculptural installation, incorporating new materials, textures, narratives and formats in her work. Combining a radical optimism with social critique, she will transform the Pavilion with her vibrant, articulate and spatially dynamic artworks. Himid’s exhibitions take the visitor on an exploratory journey, which is why it’s so exciting to imagine how she will use the enfilade of six spaces in the British Pavilion. We are truly delighted to be working with Lubaina Himid on the British Council commission for 2026”.

Emma Dexter, Director Visual Arts and the British Council Collection, and Commissioner of the British Pavilion





Images credit: Youssef ElNahas

2026 VENICE FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME

Each Fellow will receive a Travel Grant of £3,300 (three thousand and three hundred British pounds).

The Fellowships Programme has two major components:

1. Exhibition ambassador: Fellows will participate in a one-month group residency inside the British Pavilion: invigilating the exhibition spaces, engaging with the public, leading tours and acting as the face of the British Council and its exhibition commission.

Skills developed: team-work and problem-solving; personal confidence, resilience and adaptability; public speaking; public engagement; exhibition interpretation; communication and foreign language; cultural awareness and understanding; time-management.

Time commitment for invigilation is 23h per week during the period of one month.

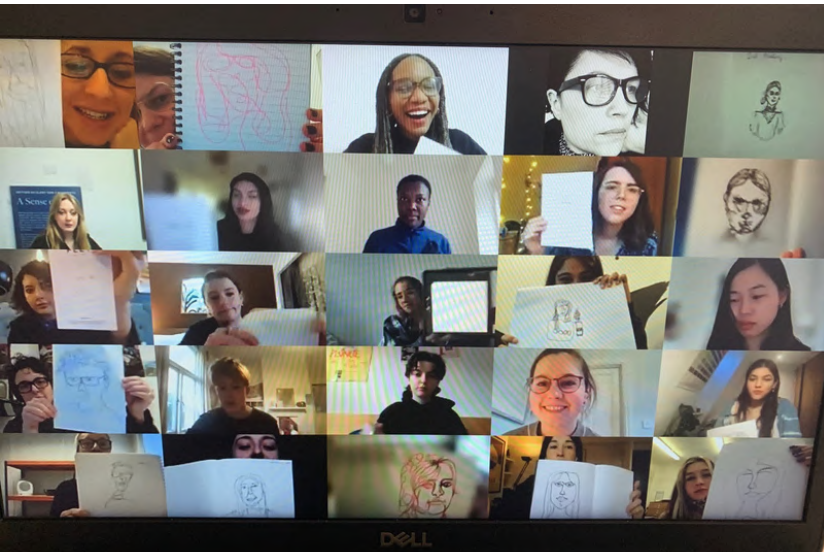
2. Research or creative project: Fellows undertake fieldwork in Venice to inform their creative practice, research and/or academic interests. This fieldwork should be connected to the themes of Venice, La Biennale, the 61st International Art Exhibition, the British Pavilion and/or the 2026 commissioned exhibition (Lubaina Himid).

Skills developed: time-management and planning; personal confidence and resilience; flexibility and collaboration; research, mapping and testing ideas; creativity and problem-solving; communication; audience engagement; project management.

Previous project examples can be found in the 2022, 2023 and 2024 [Yearbooks](#).

INDUCTION

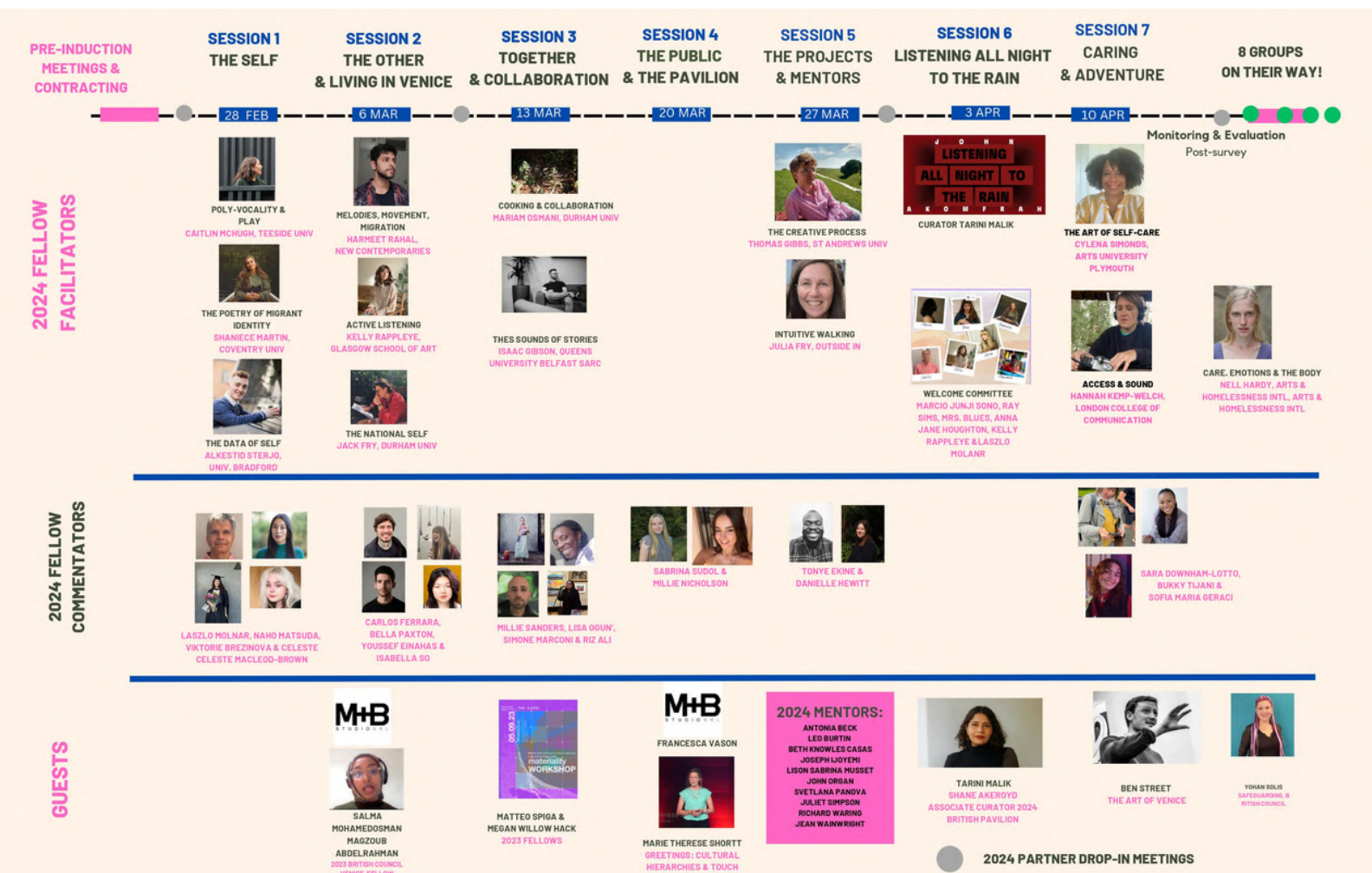
Fellows are required to attend an Online Induction School Training in March and April 2026 so they can prepare for their Venice trip, participate in a series of talks and workshops, and build together a community of practice throughout the 2026 year.



"It was magical to see how we came together in such a short period - I did not think this could be possible in an online environment. I was nervous but the small group discussions and the warmth in the room put me at ease. Meeting Becky before the Induction was very helpful because she listened to my story and ideas, and talked about how I could be comfortable in an online space with so many people that I did not know. Now I feel I know them all and we are connected even if different."

Past Fellow

An indicative Induction, *designed and facilitated by Becky Schutt with and for the Fellows*



PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Since its start in 2014, the Fellowships Programme has welcomed over 500+ UK-based participants, from which:

- 65% have gone on to work in the arts/creative/cultural sector.
- 35% pursued/remained in the academic or researcher sectors.

Through their training and experience in supporting the exhibition at the British Pavilion, Fellows learn techniques for enhancing a visitor's understanding and expanding their perspectives on the show.

The invigilation experience provides them with valuable work experience and confidence in contributing to a gallery setting.



Key Highlights of the 2022 Programme Evaluation Report

- 92% of Fellows believe their employability is enhanced after participating in the Programme.
- 92% believe they are more likely to get work opportunities that would not have been open to them without the Fellowship.
- 71% believe that they can secure greater remuneration in the short term when applying for jobs.
- The Exhibition Ambassador residency at the British Pavilion resulted in an extensive skills development for the Fellows, but most strongly in improving: “cultural awareness & understanding”, “communicating with audiences & exhibition interpretation”, “personal confidence & resilience”, “foreign language skill”, “team-work & problem-solving”, “time-management & planning”.
- The Fellowship has resulted in 75% of Fellows better prepared for designing future research; 75% of Fellows better prepared for professional/academic international collaborations; 71% better prepared for future creative practice; and 67% better prepared for personal international collaboration.

CASE STUDY: SHANIECE MARTIN, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

As related to British Council by 2024 Fellow, Shaniece Martin.

<Initially hesitant to apply to the Venice Fellowships Programme, Shaniece questioned whether she belonged in museums and artistic spaces. With a mixed Southeast Asian and British background, Shaniece grew up in a predominantly white village and didn't visit cultural institutions or venues as part of her upbringing.

But through creative writing, poetry, and Punjabi music, she began to reclaim her identity and connect with her heritage. Inspired by John Akomfrah's work and his reflections on representation and visibility, including after seeing his work on view at Tate, she found the courage to apply for the program. From her very first conversation, she felt genuinely seen and heard. Surrounded by a diverse cohort of Fellows from various backgrounds and experiences, the long-held insecurities—Am I good enough? Do I belong here?—began to dissolve. These doubts were replaced by a sense of deep listening, meaningful connection, and shared purpose within the group.

While in Venice, invigilating Akomfrah's exhibition became both an artistic and personal awakening for her. Initially overwhelmed by the sensory intensity of the dark, sound-filled space, she turned to writing—unapologetically capturing her thoughts in the dark, even when she couldn't read what she wrote. Her time spent in the exhibition became a precious gift: opportunities for intimate, one-on-one conversations with the public, reflections on identity, and a deeper understanding of her role in making art accessible and relevant. She left Venice with a renewed sense of confidence, creative clarity, and a strong commitment to using her voice and work to support others—especially fellow generational immigrants—in feeling truly seen, heard, and represented.

Following her Fellowship and on completion of her PhD, Shaniece felt confident to apply for the role of Archives Assistant at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry. She is supporting the development and installation of new displays in the 'Stories That Made Us: Roots, Resilience, Representation' exhibition, which celebrates and preserves the rich heritage of South Asian and British South Asian communities in Coventry.>





ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

There are additional opportunities for Fellows to attend cultural events and network with creative individuals during their month in Venice.

Subject to availability, these events may include:

- Private tours of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, led by the 2026 Guggenheim Interns
- Art Night Venezia, organized by Ca' Foscari University and the City of Venice
- Feast of the Redentore
- Private Exhibition Tour at Ocean Space
- Events at National Pavilions within the Biennale

Fellows are offered opportunities to lead public tours in the Pavilion.

PAST PROGRAMME PARTNERS

Thank you to our past Programme Partners who have supported the Fellowships so far.

Here are a few from recent years:



APPLY TO BE A 2026 FELLOW

- Candidates must be over 18 years old and based in the UK.
- Candidates must be enrolled or connected to a selected 2026 Programme Partner Institution or Organisation
- The British Council welcomes creative individuals from all backgrounds, areas of knowledge and/or academic departments, and we particularly welcome applications from underrepresented groups in the creative sector, including those from the following: global ethnic majority, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and those facing social barriers to accessing the arts, the creative industries and other economic opportunities.

Please refer the Guidance Notes for further details and a link to the Application Form.

The deadline for applications is set by the Programme Partner and will be a date between the period of 19 September - 30 November 2025.

We ask candidates to check the specific date directly with their Programme Partner.

Thank you for your interest in the Venice Fellowships Programme.





Images thanks to British Council, TEMPLO, Francesco D'Alessio, Vanessa Ma and Youssef ElNahas .