

Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards

2026/27 Application Pack



<https://www.londonwriterscentre.org.uk/project/wellcome-collection-non-fiction-awards/>

February 2026

Contents

About Wellcome Collection	3
About London Writers Centre	3
About the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards	4
Eligibility Requirements	6
How we define Non-Fiction about Health and Being Human	7
What you need to do to apply	7
How is it judged?	9
Key dates	10
Bursary, Access and Travel Funds	11
Frequently Asked Questions	12
Terms and Conditions	15

The application pack is **available in the following formats**: pdf and inclusive read document from the London Writers Centre webpage:

<https://www.londonwriterscentre.org.uk/project/wellcome-collection-non-fiction-awards/>

We encourage all applicants to **read through the pack** and, in particular, the Eligibility Requirements, Terms and Conditions and Frequently Asked Questions.

We will be hosting a **free online information session** on applying to the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards on Monday 2 March, 7pm-8pm. Please see page 7 for more information and to book a place.

If you require further information on submitting your entry or a question regarding access, please **contact** Bobby Nayyar:

bobby@londonwriterscentre.org.uk

About Wellcome Collection

Wellcome Collection is a free museum and library. We believe everyone's experience of health matters. Through our collections, exhibitions and events, in books and online, we explore the past, present and future of health.

You can find us near Euston station in London and at wellcomecollection.org. Our exhibitions and events are always free. You can use our library and view items from our collections free of charge too – you may just need to book in advance.

Wellcome Collection opened in 2007. We care for many thousands of items relating to health, medicine and human experience, including rare books, artworks, films and videos, personal archives, and objects. We're part of Wellcome, a charitable foundation supporting science to help build a healthier future for everyone.

www.wellcomecollection.org

About London Writers Centre

London Writers Centre (formerly Spread the Word) is London's literature development agency, a charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. We create opportunities for storytellers, creatives and readers to change the conversations we have and reimagine the world we live in by

running inclusive creative writing programmes, offering practical ways for writers to get their work into the world, discovering Londoners who love words, and nurturing those who want to write, read and share stories. We initiate change-making research including Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing (2020) and Access to Literature (2022) and develop programmes for writers that have equity and social justice at their heart. Our work includes: London Writers Awards, Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards, CRIptic x London Writers Centre Salon, Young Writers Collective, Deptford Literature Festival, and the campaign to make Lewisham the UK's first ever Borough of Literature

About the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards

Following a successful pilot programme in 2022 that supported 6 writers over a six-month programme with four writers agented and three book deals, and a highly successful full nine-month programme in 2025 that supported 6 writers with all writers agented, the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards aim to find and support writers from underrepresented groups, who have a big idea for a non-fiction book for general readers, that engages with the themes of health and being human. The Awards will support 6 writers in 2026/27 with the following programme of activity:

- A £2,000 bursary
- Insight and Industry days
- Mentoring by a published author
- Mentoring by a non-fiction editor
- An induction to Wellcome Collection, its library and resources
- 1:1 sessions with Wellcome Collection's team, including the publishing team, library research specialists and Stories editorial team

- 1:1 sessions with the London Writers Centre team
- The chance to be published by Wellcome Collection
- Masterclasses on writing non-fiction
- Critical feedback group sessions led by an author
- Meeting with an agent
- Travel and Access fund as required

By the end of the ten-month programme the writers will have honed their book idea into a proposal and sample extract(s). We will close the programme with a sharing event at Wellcome Collection with networking with agents and editors. Each writer will be awarded a £2,000 bursary to support their writing and research. There will be a travel fund to support those who live outside of London, as most of the project will take place in person in London. There will also be an access fund to support writers who may need additional support to take part. Alongside the development programme there will be a series of free, public events and workshops.

Eligibility Requirements

The Awards aim to increase the diversity of writers actively writing a non-fiction book that touches on health and being human. Applications will be open to writers who identify as:

- Disabled and/or*
- People of the Global Majority**
- Unpublished or have not published or self-published a non-fiction book(s)
- Unagented
- Aged 18+
- Full-time resident in the UK

* We use the Social Model of disability, which says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their diagnosis, condition or difference. We understand disability to include deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and neurodivergent people, and people with mental health and chronic health conditions.

**“Global Majority” refers to people who are Black, Asian, Indigenous, dual-heritage, and/or have been previously referred to as "ethnic minorities". We use "people of the global majority" since this represents over 80% of the world’s population.

How we define Non-Fiction about Health and Being Human

To be eligible for the programme, your proposed book project should have a central theme that engages with some aspect of medicine, health, illness, or identity. This can cover many genres of writing – including science, medicine, memoir, social or cultural history, essay or polemic. Examples published under the Wellcome Collection imprint include *Disobedient Bodies* by Emma Dabiri, *Nine Minds* by Daniel Tammet, *Divided* by Annabel Sowemimo, and *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande.

At some point, health, illness and medicine touch all our lives. Writing that finds stories in those moments adds new meaning to what it means to be human. The subjects these projects grapple with might include but not be limited to: the climate crisis, mental health, physical illness, health equity, the body, infection, pain, memory, identity, social histories, medical justice, and decolonising health. In keeping with its vision and goals, the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards aim to change whose stories and work is published in the UK.

What you need to do to apply

Applications will **open from 12pm (midday) on Wednesday 25 February 2026** and **close at 5pm on Wednesday 8 April 2026**.

There are 2 ways you can apply:

1. Online through a Submittable form for Text responses to questions
2. Online through a Submittable form for Audio or Video responses to questions

Applications will be managed by London Writers Centre through our Submittable account. You will need to create a free Submittable account to enter. There will be a form to complete with your contact details plus:

- An eligibility statement about your writing life, what you aim to achieve in the programme, and how you meet the eligibility criteria (300 words or up to 2 minutes 30 seconds for the Audio/Video form)
- An outline of the idea for the book you'd like to write and how it relates to health and being human (300 words or up to 2 minutes 30 seconds for the Audio/Video form)
- Optional access information (150 words or up to 2 minutes)
- Upload a sample of writing from the proposed project, or existing non-fiction writing that covers the themes you'd like to explore and is for the audience you'd aim to reach with your proposed project (up to 3,000 words with no minimum word limit)

The **Submittable links** are:

Text form: <https://spreadtheword.submittable.com/submit/349667/wellcome-collection-non-fiction-awards-2026-27-text-only-application>

Audio/Video form:

<https://spreadtheword.submittable.com/submit/349669/wellcome-collection-non-fiction-awards-2026-27-audio-or-video-submission>

There is a form available to download from the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards webpage for you to draft your responses prior to making your submission.

Online Information Session

London Writers Centre will be holding a free online information session on **Monday 2 March, 7pm-8pm** hosted by London Writers Centre programme manager Bobby Nayyar and Wellcome Collection's publisher Francesca Barrie. The session will include an overview of the programme, advice on applying and an opportunity to ask questions. They will be joined by an alumni of last year's programme to share their experiences. The session will be BSL interpreted and will be recorded and available to view during the application window.

To **register for the session** please visit:

<https://www.londonwriterscentre.org.uk/our-events/wellcome-collection-non-fiction-awards-2026-27-thinking-of-applying/>

How is it judged?

There will be several rounds of assessment of your Submittable application plus an interview to select the final 6 writers for the programme. In the first stage all entries will be anonymised and read by a first reader as well as staff at both Wellcome Collection and London Writers Centre. A longlist will be read by the judges to decide upon the 9 candidates to be interviewed for the 6 spaces on the programme.

We are looking for writers who are fully committed to making a step-change in their writing careers to focus on writing a non-fiction book that engages with some aspect of health. We will be looking for varied and compelling ideas, clarity that you are ready to make the most of this ambitious opportunity, and an exceptional writing sample. The main deliverable of the programme is for

each writer to have developed their idea into a proposal plus sample chapter(s) that will be ready to submit to agents and publishers. Our overall goal is for each writer to go on and be published in this field. Wellcome Collection will be requesting first refusal on each proposal for a period of three months from the completion of the programme. This means they will have the first opportunity to make an offer to publish the books developed by the writers.

The interviews will take place either in person at Wellcome Collection's offices or via Zoom and will last up to 30 minutes. Reasonable adjustments will be made. The interview date is:

Wednesday 3 June 2026

We will undertake our own due diligence at the longlisting stage to ensure that applicants are eligible. The shortlisted candidates will need to prove their full-time residency in the UK.

Key dates

Tuesday 25 February 2026, 12pm (midday) – Application window opens

Monday 2 March 2026, 7pm-8pm – Zoom event about Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards with Q&A

Wednesday 8 April 2026, 5pm – Application window closes

Wednesday 20 May 2026 – All applicants will be contacted to let them know if selected for interview

Wednesday 3 June 2026 – Interview day

Friday 5 June 2026 – Interviewees contacted to let them know if they've been selected for the programme

Saturday 12 September 2026 – Launch event

Wednesday 9 June 2027 – Sharing event

We will be running the creative writing masterclasses in person with hybrid online access available, while the critical feedback group sessions will take place on Zoom. We will make adjustments for awardees who have access needs. Dates are provisional at this stage. A full schedule of dates will be given to the successful candidates in September 2026.

Bursary, Access and Travel Funds

Each writer on the programme will be given a bursary of £2,000, which will be paid in stages. The purpose of the bursary is to support your writing work (e.g. to buy materials, books, go on a research trip and to give you the time and space to write, e.g. extra childcare). There is also an access fund to support you. For writers who are not based in London there is a limited travel fund to help cover the cost of attending the in-person sessions.

The access fund is set up to enable reasonable adjustments to be made according to need. Access fund applications are not visible in the judging process and are not factored into any decision making on who is selected to be on the programme.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who runs the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards

The programme is run in partnership between London Writers Centre and Wellcome Collection. The programme administration and day-to-day management is run by London Writers Centre with input from the publishing team at Wellcome Collection. The programme is funded by Wellcome Collection.

Do I have to pay anything?

No. Participation in the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards is free at the point of delivery. For the recipients who live in London, travel costs associated with participating will not be covered by London Writers Centre. For the recipients who live outside of London there will be a travel fund to cover journeys to in person activity. Each recipient will receive a £2,000 bursary to cover costs in developing their ideas. There is also an access fund to support writers participating in the programme.

Will it be online or in person?

Most activity will be in person, with online access as needed. We will make adjustments to support writers who may not be able to travel.

Will it take up much of my time?

This is an intensive programme with workshops, mentoring sessions, events and opportunities to develop your work on site at Wellcome Collection. We want to be ambitious with the programme, so that each candidate develops their ideas into a detailed proposal and sample chapter(s) by June 2027. We

estimate that you will need to commit 25 hours per month to make the most of the opportunities the programme will offer you.

I've done/am doing a creative writing course – can I apply?

If you are currently or are about to be enrolled in a graduate or postgraduate creative writing programme (BA, MA or PhD) or currently are or will be part of a longer-term development programme for writers that lasts for 3 months and above (such as the Faber Academy, Curtis Brown Creative, Penguin Random House Write Now, London Libraries Emerging Writers scheme) you are not eligible to apply. If you have previously completed a BA, MA or PhD in creative writing in the last two years, you are also not eligible to apply. We have made this eligibility requirement to reach people who have not had sustained writer development.

I'm a published writer, can I apply?

Yes, you can apply as long as you have not self-published or published a non-fiction book for a general trade audience. If you have published an academic monograph, you can still apply.

I have an agent, can I apply?

No, we are looking for writers who do not yet have the support and guidance of an agent.

I'm an academic and have published a non-fiction book, can I apply?

If you have published an academic monograph or other academic text, then yes you can apply.

I have access requirements, what should I do?

If you have access requirements to enable you to participate in the programme, please complete the relevant section in the submission form when submitting your application. We understand that not all access requirements require a financial spend, rather adjustments to how we run the programme (e.g. how often we take breaks, how participants would like to communicate, time for self-reflection and feedback). We will review access requirements before and during the programme.

Is this programme connected to the Wellcome Collection publishing imprint?

Will they publish my book?

Staff from Wellcome Collection's publishing imprint will be involved in the judging and delivery of the programme. The Publishing team are actively looking for under-represented writers to take on and publish.

Participation in the scheme shall not be interpreted as a commitment to publish your work, and you will not be obliged to accept any publishing offer made to you during or following the scheme. However, by accepting the terms of the scheme, applicants agree that they will extend to Wellcome Collection the first option of publishing their first work of non-fiction on fair and reasonable market terms to be agreed in good faith.

Does my proposal have to relate to items in Wellcome Collection?

No. There's no requirement for your proposal to centre on, or refer to, Wellcome Collection's archive or exhibition themes, or the wider research and priorities of Wellcome. As long as your idea relates to health and being human, we want to hear about it.

If you take part in the programme, there will be support to start researching your idea within Wellcome Collection's library collection and with its wider research partners and network. Whatever your starting point, we hope this will be a valuable resource. But we recognise this might not be relevant to every writer's idea or approach.

My question isn't listed here – what do I do?

Please also read the terms and conditions in this document. If you still have any questions, please email Bobby at bobby@londonwriterscentre.org.uk.

Terms and Conditions

1. Applicants must be aged 18+.
2. Applicants must be permanently resident in the UK.
3. Applicants must be deaf or disabled, neurodivergent and/or people of the Global Majority, Black, Asian, Indigenous, dual-heritage.
4. Applicants can be unpublished or published, as long as they have not published or self-published a non-fiction book for a general trade audience. If you have published an academic monograph, you can still apply.
5. Applicants must be unagented.

6. Applicants who are currently enrolled on an academic creative writing course (BA, MA or PhD) or have completed a BA, MA or PhD in creative writing in the last two years are not eligible to apply.
7. Applicants who have been selected for a writer development programme that runs during September 2026 to June 2027 are not eligible to apply.
8. Applications will be accepted either online through our Submittable page: <https://spreadtheword.submittable.com/submit> Or as an audio or video file entered through our Submittable page. If you have access requirements and need assistance to apply, please contact bobby@londonwriterscentre.org.uk.
9. To qualify, an application must consist of two items: the completed online/audio/video form (audio/ video responses to the form questions will need to be in one of the following formats: for audio: MP3; WAV or M4A and for video: MP4 or MOV file format) and an uploaded sample of creative writing written in prose from the project the applicant wishes to develop, which can be uploaded as a Word/PDF file.
10. Incomplete applications will not be considered or acknowledged.
11. Applications must be written by a single author who meets the eligibility criteria of the Writing Awards.

12. All work submitted must be the individual and original work of the applicant.
13. Applications and uploaded extracts will be checked for the use of generative AI. Any application or extract found to have used generative AI will be disqualified.
14. Applications must be in English.
15. Applications received after the deadline of 5pm on Wednesday 8 April 2026 will not be accepted.
16. Applicants agree that they will extend to Wellcome Collection the first option of publishing their first work of non-fiction on fair and reasonable market terms to be agreed in good faith. The first option will last for three months from the completion of the programme.
17. The written sample must be from the non-fiction project the applicant plans to write or existing non-fiction writing that covers the themes you'd like to explore and is for the audience you'd aim to reach with your proposed project. The sample must be a maximum of 3,000 words with no minimum word count, please ensure your prose extract is double-spaced, 12-point font and paginated.
18. Entries will be judged anonymously. To that effect, please do not include your name on any uploaded documents. This includes your writing

sample. Any writing samples with names or identifying information on them will render the application disqualified.

19. Only one application will be considered per writer.

20. Due to the high number of applications, London Writers Centre does not guarantee to offer feedback on any application.

21. Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an interview on Wednesday 3 June 2026 either in person at Wellcome Collection's offices or online via Zoom. Please check that you are available on this date before applying. We will confirm the interview format and other details in May 2026.

22. Successful applicants must be available to attend all the activities associated with the Writing Awards, including an in person launch event on Saturday 12 September 2026, masterclasses, mentoring, meetings, one-on-one support, and a sharing event on Wednesday 9 June 2027. A full schedule of dates will be made available to successful applicants.

23. For the avoidance of doubt, the Award organisers are under no obligation to select the maximum number of Winning Applicants (i.e. six) if it is felt that not enough of the Submissions are of a sufficient quality.

24. Participation in the programme is free at the point of delivery. Other costs associated with participating in the Writing Awards will not be covered by London Writers Centre.

25. Each recipient will be awarded a bursary of £2,000, which must be used to support the development of their proposed project.
26. Access funding is available to make reasonable adjustments within the financial means available to the programme. If you request access funding, you must complete the access funding section of the application form.
27. London Writers Centre reserves the right to withdraw and reclaim the financial value of an Award, bursary or access fund monies and to ask the recipient to leave the programme if they fail to attend activities without a valid reason, break our code of conduct, or are found to have fabricated any information or material in their application.
28. London Writers Centre will make final decisions on eligibility and perform due diligence checks on interview candidates. Our decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entered into on the subject. Please also refer to the eligibility criteria.
29. Successful applicants must be available to participate in media and PR for the Writing Awards' announcement, sharing event and related activity.
30. Judges, their close family members, employees or trustees of London Writers Centre and Wellcome are not permitted to apply.

31. Submission of an application to the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards will be taken to mean acceptance of London Writers Centre's and Submittable's privacy policies.

32. Submission of an application to the Wellcome Collection Non-Fiction Awards will be taken to mean acceptance of these terms and conditions. Entries that fail to comply with these terms and conditions will be disqualified.

33. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence or discussion about the judging process will be entered into.

34. London Writers Centre reserves the right to alter dates, timeline, and terms and conditions stated above should it be necessary for any reason.