

Kaplan Assessments

Emerging Voices Award Scheme 2026-27

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. About the award scheme

1. What are the Kaplan Assessments Emerging Voices Awards?

The awards support promising postgraduate and early-career researchers to develop focused projects on inclusive and responsible digital English assessment. The inaugural cycle offers up to two awards and combines research funding with mentoring, conference access and public recognition.

2. What is the theme for 2026-27?

The theme is “Inclusive English Assessment for Access, Opportunity and Wellbeing”. Projects must be clearly about assessment design, delivery, use, interpretation, fairness or test-taker experience. “Wellbeing” is used in an assessment-specific sense, such as candidate burden, anxiety, confidence, clarity and perceptions of fairness.

3. What research areas are especially welcome?

We welcome focused projects in the following areas:

- accessibility and inclusion in digital English assessment, including disability access, neurodiversity, accommodations, usability, readability and digital barriers;
- candidate experience and assessment-related wellbeing, including burden, confidence, clarity, fairness and online testing experience;
- transition into postgraduate study and how English assessment is interpreted or used by students and institutions;
- employability, mobility and wider opportunity where English assessment has a clear role; and

- responsible digital innovation, including AI, automation, security and feedback where these relate to fairness, access, transparency or candidate understanding.

4. Why is Kaplan Assessments running the scheme?

The scheme reflects Kaplan's mission to unlock opportunity and widen access. It is designed to support the next generation of researchers, encourage useful work on real assessment questions and strengthen dialogue between researchers, test users and the wider language assessment community.

5. How many awards are available and what is each worth?

In the inaugural cycle, Kaplan intends to make up to two awards of £2,500 each. Kaplan may make fewer than two awards, or no award, if applications do not meet the required standard or if legal, financial or operational checks cannot be completed satisfactorily.

6. What else does an award recipient receive?

In addition to the £2,500 award, each recipient is expected to receive mentoring from Kaplan Assessments, standard registration for the 2027 EALTA Annual Conference (subject to final arrangements), recognition at a Kaplan-sponsored conference event and agreed opportunities to feature in Kaplan and, where approved, EALTA communications.

7. Does the award include travel and accommodation for EALTA?

No. Travel, accommodation, subsistence, visa, insurance and other attendance costs are not included unless Kaplan confirms otherwise in writing.

8. Will recipients present a formal paper at EALTA?

Not automatically. The awards event is separate from EALTA's formal academic programme. Recipients may briefly introduce their projects during the Kaplan-sponsored event, but any formal paper, poster, workshop or symposium proposal must be submitted through EALTA's normal process and is subject to independent review.

2. Eligibility

9. Who can apply as the lead applicant?

At the application deadline, the lead applicant must be aged 18 or over and be one of the following:

- a taught Master's student undertaking or preparing a dissertation;
- a research Master's or MRes student;
- a registered doctoral or professional doctorate candidate; or
- an early-career researcher whose PhD was formally awarded within the previous three years.

10. Where must applicants be based?

Applicants may be of any nationality. For the inaugural cycle, the lead applicant must be enrolled at, employed by or formally affiliated with a recognised higher education institution in the UK.

11. Can someone on a student visa apply?

Nationality is not an eligibility criterion. However, selected applicants will be responsible for checking any personal immigration, visa, scholarship, benefits or tax implications of accepting an award. Payment remains subject to Kaplan's identity, banking, sanctions and compliance checks.

12. Can a team apply?

Yes. A proposal may include collaborators, but **one eligible lead** applicant must take responsibility for the application, project delivery and award agreement. Unless the Award Agreement states otherwise, **only the lead applicant is the award recipient and receives the associated benefits.**

13. Can I submit more than one application?

No. Each person may submit only one application as lead applicant in the 2026-27 cycle. You may be named as a collaborator on another proposal, provided any overlap and conflicts are disclosed.

14. Can Kaplan employees apply?

No. Current employees of Kaplan group companies, people directly involved in administering or judging the scheme, and their immediate household members are not eligible.

15. Do I need a supervisor, mentor or line-manager endorsement?

Yes. A formal supervisor endorsement is mandatory for student applicants. Early-career researchers should normally provide an endorsement from a mentor or line manager. The endorsement should confirm awareness of the proposal, the applicant's status, the feasibility of the project and the support available.

16. Are career breaks taken into account for early-career eligibility?

The formal starting point is three years from the date the PhD was awarded. Applicants whose eligibility may be affected by parental leave, caring responsibilities, illness, disability or another significant career interruption should contact EmergingVoices@kaplan.co.uk before applying so that the circumstances can be considered consistently.

3. Project fit and scope

17. Must my project focus specifically on the Kaplan Test of English?

Every proposal must have clear and substantive relevance to the Kaplan Test of English (KTE). This does not mean that every study must use operational KTE data. The application should explain how the findings could directly inform KTE design, delivery, score use, accessibility, fairness, candidate experience or responsible innovation.

18. Does my project have to use KTE data?

No. A project may use public KTE materials, practice or demonstration access, self-generated participant data, interviews, surveys or approved summary outputs. Applicants are encouraged to design studies that can proceed with no sensitive KTE data.

19. Can I apply for funding for a completed study?

No. The award is intended to enable prospective work or a project at an early stage. Completed studies, retrospective best-paper submissions and projects whose substantive data collection and analysis are already complete are not eligible.

20. Can my existing dissertation or doctoral project be supported?

Yes, provided the proposed award-funded work is still prospective, is clearly defined, is not already fully funded and can make substantive use of the award. You must explain which activities the award would enable and how they fit within the wider degree project.

21. Can I apply if I already have other funding?

Yes, but you must disclose all current or proposed funding that overlaps with the project. The same activities cannot be funded twice. The application must show that the Kaplan award would support distinct and necessary costs or outputs.

22. What projects are outside the scope of the call?

Projects are unlikely to be supported if they concern general student mental health, counselling, admissions policy, teaching or employability without a substantive English-assessment focus; are primarily consultancy or commercial product development; depend on unavailable or security-sensitive KTE data; lack a credible ethics route; or are too broad to deliver with the available support.

23. How long should a project last?

Projects should normally be deliverable within 6-12 months. The final duration and milestones will be agreed with successful applicants in the Award Agreement. Applicants should propose a timetable that fits their academic or professional commitments and the expected deliverables.

24. May my project involve participants under 18?

For the inaugural cycle, projects involving direct research participation by people under 18 are outside the default scope. KTE data relating to test takers under 18 will not be provided.

25. May I use generative AI in the proposal or research?

Use of generative AI is not automatically prohibited, but it must be disclosed. Applicants remain responsible for accuracy, originality, academic integrity, confidentiality, data protection and compliance with institutional policy. Non-public KTE information must never be entered into an unauthorised public AI tool.

4. KTE data and other support

26. What types of KTE data or support may be available?

KTE requests are grouped into four support bands:

- Band A - public/open materials: public technical materials, website information, practice resources and general policy information;
- Band B - low-risk support: possible demonstration access, limited research vouchers or fee waivers, and a briefing with an appropriate KTE specialist;
- Band C - aggregated outputs: safe summary tables or descriptive outputs produced by Kaplan, without releasing the underlying candidate-level dataset; and

- Band D - restricted de-identified data: row-level data stripped of direct identifiers and shared only under a separate agreement. This will be used rarely in the inaugural cycle.

27. What KTE data are unavailable by default?

Kaplan will not provide identifiable candidate data, data about test takers under 18, biometric data, item psychometric parameters, secure item content, live security rules or other security-sensitive materials.

28. Is requested KTE support guaranteed if my application is selected?

No. Approval of an award does not automatically approve a data or support request. All requests remain subject to feasibility, privacy, security, legal and operational review. If an essential request cannot be met, the offer may depend on an agreed redesign of the project.

29. How should I describe my data and support needs?

Complete the KTE Data and Support Request Form and identify each item as either “essential” or “desirable”. Be specific about the variable, sample, format, timing and purpose. Avoid requesting everything that might be useful; ask only for what the research question genuinely requires.

30. Will I need a data-sharing agreement?

Possibly. If Kaplan approves non-public KTE data or confidential materials, the recipient and, where relevant, their institution will need to sign a separate data-sharing or confidentiality schedule covering access, storage, permitted use, onward sharing, retention, deletion, incidents and publication.

5. Applying and selection

31. What must I submit?

Applicants must submit the required materials through the application page:

- the completed online application form and project proposal;
- a project abstract, research question(s), rationale, brief literature context, methodology, ethics plan, timetable, anticipated outcomes and dissemination plan;
- a simple itemised budget;
- the required supervisor, mentor or line-manager endorsement;
- the KTE Data and Support Request Form; and
- declarations covering conflicts of interest, overlapping funding and use of generative AI.

32. What are the key dates?

The application deadline is 30 November 2026. Kaplan intends to notify applicants privately before Christmas 2026. Successful projects are expected to begin in early 2027 after contracting, ethics and support arrangements are complete. Public recognition is planned for the 2027 EALTA Annual Conference, subject to final event arrangements.

33. How will applications be assessed?

Applications will first undergo an eligibility and completeness check. Eligible applications will then be independently reviewed and moderated against the published criteria:

- fit with the theme and relevance to KTE - 20%;
- importance and originality of the research question - 15%;

- methodological quality and feasibility - 20%;
- potential value to KTE and the wider field - 20%;
- applicant capability and support - 10%;
- dissemination and visibility potential - 10%; and
- budget and value for money - 5%.

34. Who selects the recipients?

Kaplan administers the selection process. The panel will include Kaplan reviewers and members of the KTE Technical Advisory Board or other suitably qualified experts. EALTA supports promotion and conference recognition but does not review applications or select recipients.

35. Are ethics considered during selection?

Yes. Ethical credibility, participant protection and a realistic route to institutional approval are threshold requirements. A proposal will not be funded if these elements are not credible, regardless of its numerical score.

36. Will I receive feedback if I am unsuccessful?

Kaplan may provide brief general feedback but is not obliged to provide individual score sheets, reviewer identities or detailed academic feedback.

37. Can I appeal the decision?

Academic judgements are final and are not subject to re-marking. A procedural review may be requested only where the published eligibility rules appear to have been applied incorrectly, a material procedural irregularity may have affected the outcome, or a relevant conflict of interest was not managed. Requests must normally be made within 10 working days of notification.

38. Can I request an adjustment to the application process?

Yes. Applicants who need an accessible format, reasonable adjustment or alternative method of submission should contact EmergingVoices@kaplan.co.uk as early as possible and no later than 10 working days before the deadline. Requesting an adjustment will not disadvantage an application.

6. Funding, delivery and outputs

39. How is the £2,500 paid?

Unless the Award Agreement states otherwise, 60% (£1,500) will be paid after the agreement is signed and the project-start conditions are met. The remaining 40% (£1,000) will be paid after Kaplan accepts the required final deliverables. Payment may be made to the recipient, as specified in the agreement.

40. What may the award be used for?

Appropriate costs may include participant expenses, transcription, research software or licences, travel needed for data collection, minor research assistance, accessibility costs and approved dissemination costs. The budget must be proportionate and clearly linked to the project.

41. What may the award not be used for?

Unless Kaplan agrees otherwise, the award cannot be used for tuition or degree fees, unrelated living expenses, debt repayment, large capital equipment, institutional overheads, activities already fully funded elsewhere, or costs incurred before the Award Agreement start date.

42. What deliverables will recipients be expected to produce?

The detailed deliverables will be confirmed in the Award Agreement. They are expected to include proportionate project updates, a final research report, a short public-facing project summary, a final expenditure statement and an agreed dissemination contribution, including brief remarks at the EALTA recognition event where attendance is possible.

43. Who owns the research?

Recipients retain ownership of their original research. The Award Agreement will give Kaplan a non-exclusive right to cite, summarise, publicise and host agreed award outputs. Where non-public KTE data or materials are used, additional confidentiality and pre-publication review conditions may apply.

44. Does Kaplan control the findings?

No. The scheme is intended to support credible research, including findings that may identify limitations or areas for improvement. However, recipients must report accurately, protect confidential and security-sensitive information, acknowledge the award appropriately and follow any agreed review process before publishing material based on non-public KTE data.

45. What happens if the project changes or is delayed?

Recipients should raise issues with Kaplan promptly. Reasonable changes may be agreed in writing. Material changes to the research question, methodology, timetable, budget, ethics route, data request or dissemination plan require prior approval. Kaplan is not required to increase the award if costs rise or the project takes longer than expected.

7. Questions for supervisors, mentors and line managers

46. What does the endorsement need to confirm?

The endorsement should confirm the applicant's status and affiliation, that the endorser has read the proposal, that the project appears feasible within the applicant's programme or role, and that an appropriate route exists for research ethics, data management and academic support.

47. Does endorsing an application make the supervisor financially or legally responsible?

The lead applicant remains responsible for the application and project. The endorsement is not itself the Award Agreement and does not make the supervisor a recipient.

48. How much supervision is Kaplan expecting?

Kaplan does not prescribe a fixed number of hours. The endorser should provide the level of academic or professional oversight normally appropriate to the applicant and project, including

support with scope, methods, ethics and quality. Kaplan mentoring complements rather than replaces institutional supervision.

49. Can a supervisor endorse more than one applicant?

Yes, provided the supervisor can genuinely support each project and discloses any relevant conflict. Each application will be assessed independently.

50. Will the supervisor be contacted?

Kaplan may contact a named supervisor, mentor, line manager or institution to verify eligibility, clarify support, confirm ethics arrangements or support contracting and payment. Applicants should ensure endorsers know that their details have been provided and have access to the Applicant Privacy Notice.

51. Does the supervisor need to attend the EALTA conference?

No. Conference registration is a benefit for the named award recipient. Supervisors may attend independently through EALTA's normal registration arrangements.

8. Privacy, confidentiality and further information

52. How will applicant information be used?

Kaplan will use applicant information to assess eligibility and proposals, administer selection, contact applicants, manage conflicts, complete compliance checks and, for recipients, manage the award, payment, mentoring and agreed publicity. The Applicant Privacy Notice explains the purposes, lawful bases, recipients, retention and individual rights in full.

53. Will EALTA see my application?

No. Under the agreed model, EALTA does not review applications. If you are selected, Kaplan may share the minimum information needed for conference registration, the awards event and agreed publicity, such as your name, affiliation, biography, project title and summary.

54. Will my application be confidential?

Applications will be shared only with authorised Kaplan staff, expert reviewers and professional advisers who need the information for the scheme and are subject to appropriate confidentiality and conflict requirements. Applicants should nevertheless avoid including confidential or personal information they are not authorised to disclose.

55. Who should I contact with a question?

For scheme, eligibility, adjustment or application questions, contact EmergingVoices@kaplan.co.uk. For questions about how personal information is used, contact Kaplan's Data Protection Officer at dpo@kaplan.co.uk

Ready to apply?

Read the formal application documents, discuss the proposal with your supervisor or mentor, and submit through {Application link [here](#)} by 30 November 2026.