

Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal and Lecture

The Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar (WBM) Prize Lecture is given annually by a practising historian, philosopher or scientist. The subject matter for the lecture is some aspect of the history of science, in recognition of John Wilkins FRS, the first Secretary of the Society; the social function of science, as per the Bernal Lecture Fund endowed by John Desmond Bernal FRS; and/or the philosophy of science or some other field of interest to Peter Medawar FRS.

These subjects can include the development of science over time, the foundations, methods and implications of science, and the role of science in society, including its impact on economy, technology and knowledge. These topics can span any and all branches of science. Please see Appendix 1 for previous award winners and their topics.

Nomination form

The nomination form is comprised of four sections. The sections and text fields are listed below. It is recommended to draft responses before copying them into the nomination form, although the nomination form can be saved at any point and revisited.

Nominators and referees do not need to be Fellows of the Royal Society; they can include colleagues and collaborators of any seniority and from any organisation. Nominees cannot self-nominate but can approach appropriate nominators and referees for support.

Please contact the Public Engagement team at public.engagement@royalsociety.org if you have any questions about the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar medal or the nominations process.

Section 1 – Nominator contact details

Section 2 – Nominee contact details

Section 3 – Nomination details

- Why should the candidate be considered for this medal? (30 words max)

Please provide a brief summary as to how the nominee has demonstrated excellence in their field.

- Provide a brief summary of the nominee's career history. (500 words max)

Broadly describe the nominee's career to date. Please include any academic or research posts. This section can be completed as a timeline or narrative paragraph.

- List the nominee's key achievements. (1000 words max)

Please describe the nominee's achievements in their career, including those related to public engagement and science communication. We are interested to hear about any other impacts in their field. This section can be completed as a timeline or narrative paragraph.

- Please provide information on any other relevant achievements or awards. (500 words max)

Please list any other achievements relevant to this nomination, such as prizes, titles and other accolades.

- Statement of support. (500 words max)

Please use this space to tell us, in your own words, why you believe the nominee should be awarded this prize. This section should be completed as a narrative paragraph.

- Provide evidence of the nominee's ability to communicate with non-specialist audiences, for example public lectures, engagement and media activities. (500 words max)

Evidence can be quantitative and/or qualitative and can include testimonials from colleagues, collaborators, organisations or those impacted by the nominee's work. Please include any information on the impact, the reach, and the novelty of their work.

Section 4 – Nominated Referee 1 and 2

Referees will be asked to provide a statement of support for the nominee, the relationship to the nominee, and rate the candidate's ability to communicate to a non-specialist audience as well as their scientific suitability.

Appendix 1. Selected previous winners

2025	Professor Sadiyah Qureshi	For the distinguished and internationally-recognised specialism in subjects related to science, race and empire, and the recent timely publication on extinction in the natural world as a relatively modern concept.
2024	Dr Philip Ball	For his outstanding commitments to sharing the social, cultural, and historical context of science through award-winning science communication in books, articles, and as a speaker and commentator.
2023	Professor Sarah Franklin	For her research into, and the advocacy for, the social aspects of new reproductive technologies.
2021	Professor June Barrow-Green	For her research in 19th and 20th century mathematics, notably on historical roots of modern computing, dynamical systems and the three-body problem. Her work places special emphasis on the under-representation of women in historical narratives and in contemporary mathematics.
2020	Professor Jim Al-Khalili	Professor Al-Khalili is renowned for explaining complex ideas in modern physics in an approachable way, always with a strong sense of historical context. His contributions to televised histories of electricity, quantum physics and work in quantum biology are all noteworthy. His work ranges from very recent history of science to the far longer history of Arabic science.
2018	Professor Mark Jackson	For his significant contributions in popularising medical history and the medical humanities. Professor Jackson's prize lecture was titled "Life begins at 40: the biological and cultural roots of the midlife crisis".