

# Winning a Fellowship

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Note: while the information included in these slides is as up to date and accurate as possible, it should be considered as a guide only and details should be checked at source.

**You have a good idea for  
research...**

**How do you turn this into a  
Fellowship application with good  
chances of being funded?**

# Understand the rules and restrictions

- Make sure that **you** are eligible to apply
  - Some fellowships are specific to career stage or have other restrictions.
- Make sure that your application **fits the call**
- Tailor the case for support to the application
- Provide **all** the information requested and **justify** your approach (tick the boxes!)

# Sort out the case

- A Fellowship is for **YOU**. Why are you the right person to do this work? Why should a significant amount of money be invested in you pursuing your career? **The first 'cut' in considering applications is on applicant track record.**
- Is your idea really interesting to others? You should be aiming to answer an interesting research question, not just do research
  - Do you have a clear image of what you will do and how?
  - Is it topical and exciting?
  - Have you communicated it in a simple, memorable way?
  - Has it been done before?
  - Have you differentiated it from the work of others?
  - Is it exciting and adventurous, not just incremental?
  - How will this build your career as a leader in the field?
- Write the case professionally and without irritating mistakes

# Optimizing your proposal

- Is the aim of your proposal clear?
- Is it clearly related to YOU and not just a (trivial) extension of your supervisor's work or your PhD work.
- Sell yourself and your special abilities optimally
- Make the most of your track record description and cv (where included) – this is key to getting through the first stage
- Provide clear answers to all the questions the referees will be asked **MAKE SURE YOU LOOK AT THE REFEREE REPORT FORM - TICK THE BOXES!**

# Improve your chances further

- Select **referees** very carefully - you *could* talk to them before naming them
- Give yourself **time** to write a good proposal. It always takes MUCH longer than you think!
- Listen to **advice** carefully - benefit from the experience of others
- Make sure you **ask the right questions** of your colleagues - everyone is busy and you need useful answers!
- Accept **criticism** positively. It is a **FACT** that if someone hasn't understood what you wrote, you didn't communicate it well!

# What else can help

- **Networking.** If you're thinking of applying for a Fellowship;
  - Talk to someone who has already gained one,
  - Look at an example proposal,
  - Talk to someone with experience of evaluating Fellowships.
- **Advice.** Work closely with the research group that will host you. Ensure you work with them over the months preceding submission to produce the best application possible. Involve them in responding to referees' comments.
- **Experience.** Ensure you have a 'mock interview' to maximise your chances of getting through any interview stage.

# What else can help

## Ensure from early on that you 'stand out from the crowd'.

- Make sure that your mentors/colleagues have thought about you for prizes and awards;
- Talk to potential collaborators and referees early on. Make sure that they know who you are and use them to refine your ideas;
- Get experience:
  - Build up your own funding portfolio – this is hard, and therefore impressive;
  - Aim to co-supervise projects.

# Fellowship Opportunities

## 1. Very Early Career Fellowships

- **EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellowships** in specified areas. These are advertised on the web site and currently ONLY include complexity science, synthetic biology theoretical physics, end use energy demand and statistics and probability. 3 years' funding. Aimed at 'shortly after PhD' or following career breaks.
- **Royal Academy of Engineering/EPSRC Fellowships**. Applicants should have < 3 years PDRA experience, Fellowships provide 5 years of funding. Closing date this year was late October. Area needs to be 'engineering' related (including. optics, materials, etc. etc.). University quotas apply.
- **Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships**. 3 years of funding. Only 50% funding offered so the remainder MUST be identified prior to application. Any discipline (not just Science and Engineering). Closing date was 7 March 2013.
- **Royal Astronomical Society Fellowships Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851**. 3 years of funding in areas of science and engineering.

# Fellowship Opportunities

## 2. Fellowships for established PDRAs (independent researchers):

- **EPSRC Career Acceleration Fellowships.** Restricted to specific areas (see web site). Up to 5 years of funding available.
- **STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellowships** - must have > 5 years research experience (from start of PhD) and >2 years as a PDRA. Up to 5 years of funding is available. Quota for each School/Department so you **MUST** liaise with your host institution. Closing usually early October.
- **BBSRC Fellowships.** Several available;
  - David Phillips Fellowship; 5 years, with additional support for PDRAs. 3-10 years PDRA experience. Available in BBSRC areas.
  - Enterprise Fellowships; 1 year of funding to develop new business;
- **MRC and NERC Advanced Fellowships.** As above, in the relevant areas.

# Fellowship Opportunities

3. **Royal Society Fellowships.** [http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/Dorothy Hodgkins Fellowships \(closing date ~ Jan\)](http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/Dorothy_Hodgkins_Fellowships). Offers support for excellent early-career scientists, who require a flexible working pattern, for up to four years. The need for flexibility is vital - there is no point applying for this funding if you cannot demonstrate a clear need (e.g. child care, care for sick relatives, elderly parents etc.).
  - **Newton Fellowships (Closing date 10/4/13)** Designed to attract top early career researchers to the UK for up to 2 years. These are to bring researchers to the UK from overseas.
  - **JSPS Postdoctoral Programme (closing date March)**. Provides opportunities for early career researchers from the UK to conduct research in Japan.
  - **University Research Fellowships (closing date ~ October)**. Prestigious research Fellowships providing at least 5 years of funding, normally 8, for independent researchers. For researchers with 3-8 years of PDRA experience.
4. **EU Fellowship opportunities.** It is well worth examining the EU and ERC web sites for their Fellowship opportunities. To find out about these, subscribe to the UKRO Information service.

# Timetable for Fellowship applications

- **At least 1 year ahead of the application...**
  - Make sure your publication record and cv is as good as it can be (and improving). Most Fellowship applications only count **published** papers
  - Make sure you've networked and have possible referees lined up
  - Identify which Fellowship you're going for and what the deadline is
- **< 6 months to go...**
  - Work with the 'host' group to get the ideas clear and begin the proposal. This should be written over the following months - and get it internally peer reviewed.
  - Sort out any additional financial support that might be needed
  - Let the School Research Administrator know you're planning to submit a proposal and begin work on costings (~3 months before submission)
- **< 1 month to go...**
  - Make sure you've given any information necessary to your referees (some Fellowships make getting referees' input your responsibility)
  - Make sure you've alerted the Head of School to the need for any supporting letters and provided any necessary information.

# Timetable

- **1 week to go...**
  - You should have finished your proposal - submit it! Don't leave this till the last minute as there is always a checking process whereby the proposal goes back to the School for 'final' submission. This final step can take a few days.
- **After submission**
  - Keep an eye on the timeline for decisions to make sure you're around if you need to comment on anything.
  - Ask for help and advice in responding to referees if you get the opportunity to make a response
  - If you're invited for interview, make sure you let your School know. They will help to organise a Mock interview for you to give you practice.

**GOOD LUCK!**