

MOBILITY

MOlecular **BI**odiscovery for **LI**fe sciences **INT**erdisciplinary **Y** innovation



Guidance for Applicants

Applicant guidance for the MOBILITY Fellowship scheme

Purpose of this guidance

This document is intended to help applicants understand the MOBILITY Fellowship, check their eligibility, prepare the required documents and submit a clear, complete application through the University of Birmingham online portal.

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Before you start

Read this guidance alongside the application form, CV template and motivation letter template. The templates must be used where specified. Applications that do not use the required templates may be rejected.

1. About the MOBILITY Fellowship

The MOBILITY programme is funded by the European Research Council and will appoint six outstanding postdoctoral researchers to the University of Birmingham. MOBILITY welcomes interdisciplinary research across the molecular biosciences, chemistry, engineering, data science, biotechnology and related disciplines, provided the proposed research falls under the remit of Molecular Biodiscovery and aligns with one or more of the programme pillars: Discovery, Understanding and Engineering.

Fellows will be appointed to five-year positions using a 3+2 model: three years funded by the ERC and a further two years supported by the University of Birmingham. During the fellowship, award holders will be supported to develop an independent research programme and to prepare future external fellowship applications where appropriate. Where an independent fellowship is secured, the MOBILITY Fellow will be expected to transfer to it as soon as reasonably practicable. Upon transfer, the contract associated with the MOBILITY Fellowship will end, and the Fellow will be appointed under a new contract associated with the independent fellowship.

MOBILITY is structured around three interlinked pillars: Discovery, Understanding and Engineering. Applicants should explain clearly how their proposed work aligns with at least one of these pillars and how it contributes to the wider molecular biodiscovery agenda.

What is molecular biodiscovery?

Molecular biodiscovery explores biological processes at the molecular level to generate new knowledge and develop innovative solutions to challenges in health, biotechnology, agriculture, and the environment. Research may involve discovering new biological molecules, pathways or mechanisms, understanding how molecular systems function, or engineering new molecules, technologies or approaches for real-world application.

2. Eligibility

Applicants should check all eligibility requirements before preparing a full application. Eligibility will be assessed using the information submitted through the University of Birmingham online portal and the required accompanying documents.

Area	Guidance
Degree requirements	By the application deadline, applicants must hold a first degree in their area of specialism and a higher degree, such as a PhD, relevant to their research area, or an equivalent qualification.
Career stage	There are no formal seniority requirements. However, the fellowship is designed to support training and career development. Applicants must not hold a permanent research position and should show how the fellowship will contribute to their future career development.
Nationality	The MOBILITY Fellowship is open to researchers of all nationalities.
MSCA mobility rule	Applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity, such as work or study, in the UK for more than 12 months during the three years immediately before the application deadline.
Exceptions to the mobility rule	Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays, and time spent applying for refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not counted towards the 12-month limit.

3. What the fellowship provides

MOBILITY will offer six five-year postdoctoral fellowships. Fellows will receive a competitive salary, research expenses, access to structured career development support and the employment benefits available through the University of Birmingham.

Area	Guidance
Employment model	Five-year employment contract using a 3+2 model.
Salary	Fellows will receive a salary of €80,400 per annum.
Research expenses	Each fellow will have up to £10,000 per annum for research expenses. This may be used for direct research costs, facility access charges, equipment costs, conferences and training events.
Annual leave	40 days of annual leave per year, including 8 bank holidays and 7 University closed days, with the option to purchase up to 10 additional days if necessary.
Family and other leave	Fellows will have access to paid parental leave, including maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave, alongside additional paid leave options such as compassionate leave, carers' leave, and time off for dependents.
Career development	Fellows will develop a Personal Career Development Plan and will have access to training, mentoring, peer learning, networking, Action Learning Sets and one-to-one career coaching.

4. What MOBILITY is looking for

MOBILITY is seeking postdoctoral researchers who are ready to build towards independent research leadership. Applicants should show both the quality of their proposed research and the added value of undertaking the work at the University of Birmingham.

- A clear, original and feasible research proposal within the scope of molecular biodiscovery.
- A convincing explanation of how the project aligns with Discovery, Understanding and/or Engineering.
- Evidence of research potential, appropriate to career stage and opportunity.
- A realistic plan for training, development, collaboration and future career progression.
- Identification of the most appropriate University of Birmingham department or research environment to support delivery of the proposed research and career development.
- Potential to develop towards future external fellowship schemes, such as ERC Starting Grants, UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships, Wellcome Career Development Awards or MRC Career Development Awards.

5. Research remit and fit with the University of Birmingham

Applicants may propose projects in any area within the scope of molecular biodiscovery. Applications must identify the University of Birmingham department that best fits the proposed research and explain why the environment is appropriate for delivering the project and supporting the applicant's development.

Relevant areas identified in the programme materials include but are not limited to Biosciences, Chemistry, Engineering, Psychology, Infection, Inflammation and Immunology, Medical Sciences, Health Sciences, and Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences. Applicants should not simply name a department; they should explain how the facilities, expertise, research environment and potential collaborations will support the proposed work. You do not need to have been in contact with the host department, but an understanding of how your research would fit within will be helpful. See Figure 1 for an overview of the College structure and Schools and Departments within.

Secondments and research visits

The application form asks applicants to suggest secondments and training research visits. These should be purposeful and should support the research plan, skill development, interdisciplinary exposure, collaboration or future career direction.

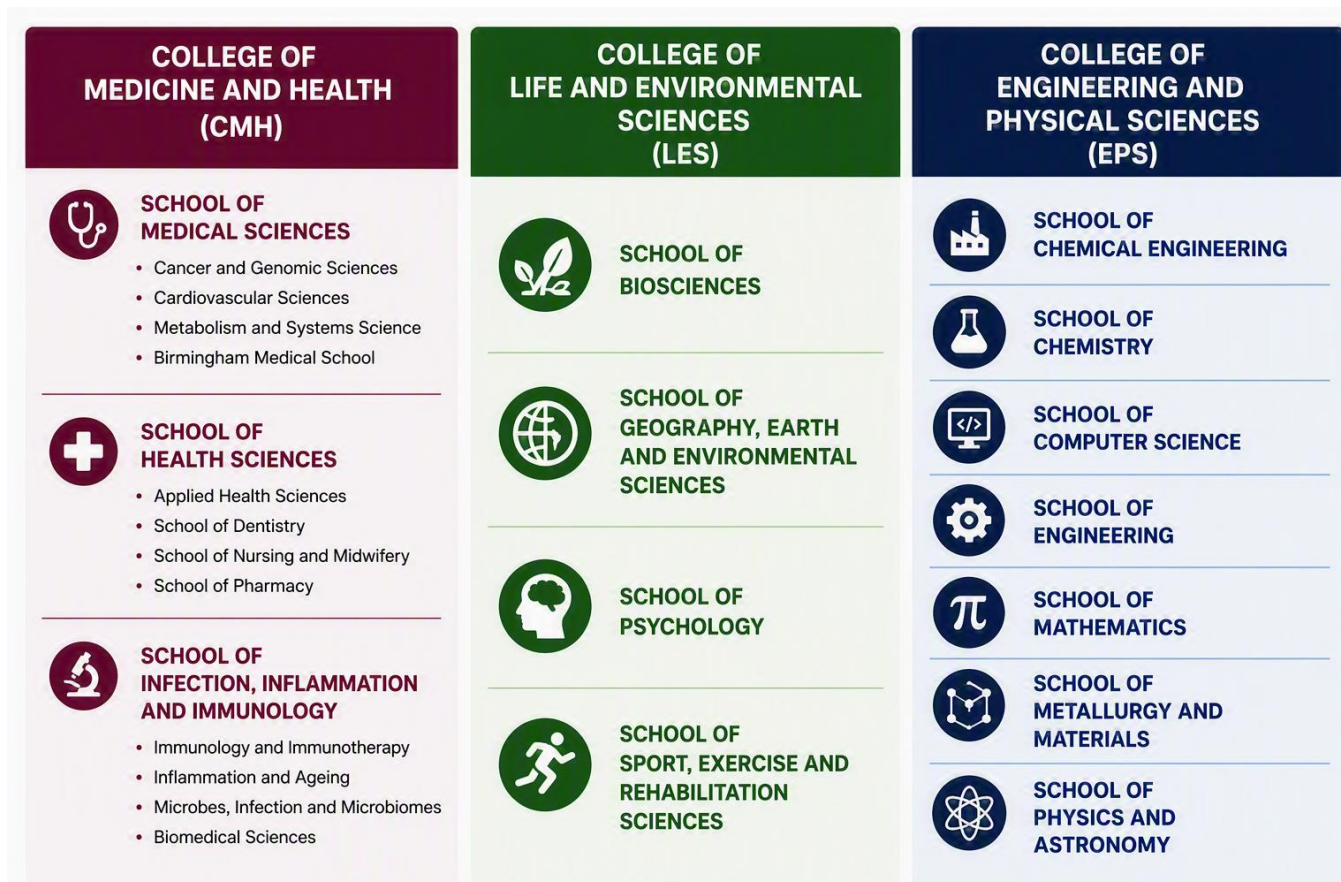


Figure 1: University of Birmingham College structure.

6. Application process and required documents

Applications must be submitted through the University of Birmingham online portal. Applicants **must** use the templates provided. If the required templates are not used, the application may be rejected.

Applicants should prepare the following documents and ensure they meet the stated formatting and page-limit requirements.

Document	Page limit	Key content
Application form	5 pages	Applicant details, lay summary, technical summary and project plan.
CV	4 pages	Personal details, education, employment, funding, prizes/awards/publications/abstracts, and narrative CV sections.
Motivation letter	2 pages	Motivation, career development objectives, planned activities to enhance profile and collaborations beyond the higher education sector.
Letter of Support	1 page	Letter of support from previous supervisor.
Ethics declaration checklist	Online form	Complete as instructed in the template.

7. Preparing each part of the application

7.1 Application form

The application form should be completed in Arial 11pt and **must not exceed five pages** (this limit does not include any references you use). Template instructions may be deleted before submission.

Section	Guidance
Lay summary	Maximum 400 words. Written for a lay audience, i.e., the general public. Avoid using technical language. Cover the problem or question, why it matters, what the project aims to find out, the approach in simple terms, and the potential impact or benefit.
Technical summary	Maximum 400 words. Write for a broad scientific audience. Cover background, importance, knowledge gap or

Section	Guidance
	hypothesis, main aims and objectives, overall methodology, expected outcomes and future prospects.
Project plan	Set out the research aims and methodology, relevance and added value compared with the state of the art, interdisciplinary contribution, applicant capability to deliver; explain why the project is feasible and how it will be delivered., secondments and training research visits, outputs and dissemination, and a Gantt chart showing the project timeline.

Writing tip

Make the project plan easy to follow. Reviewers should be able to understand the research question, why it matters, why the applicant is well placed to deliver it, and why the University of Birmingham is the right environment.

7.2 Project plan

The project plan is the main opportunity to explain the proposed work in enough detail for assessment. It should be ambitious but realistic, with a clear relationship between aims, methods, outputs and training needs.

- Scientific rationale and novelty (current state of the art; knowledge gap being addressed; relevance and added value of proposed research);
- Research aims and methodology
- Interdisciplinary research environment (how project integrates expertise across disciplines; how it aligns with objectives of MOBILITY; the interdisciplinary contribution of the proposed research; choice of UoB department);
- Risks and mitigation; identify any significant scientific or technical risks and describe how these will be mitigated;
- Training and networking (describing any proposed secondments, training research visits);
- Output plan (anticipated research outputs, publication strategy and dissemination and engagement activities);
- Applicant capability to deliver; explain why the project is feasible and how it will be delivered. This may include preliminary data, figures/images, proof-of-concept work, new methods or techniques, access to resources, collaborations, or institutional support;
- Project timelines (provide a Gantt chart illustrating the major work packages, milestones and expected outputs over the duration of the fellowship).

7.3 CV

The CV template must be completed in Arial 11pt and must not exceed four pages. Applicants should use a narrative CV approach, drawing connections between their experience, contributions and achievements

rather than providing only a chronological list. Applicants should focus on quality rather than quantity, highlighting contributions most relevant to the proposed fellowship.

Area	Guidance
Core details	Include title, name, present appointment, department and organisation.
Education and qualifications	Include the date of PhD, institutions attended, subjects, qualifications and grades or classes where relevant.
Employment history	Provide employment history in chronological date order, most recent first, including the present position and the nature of each role.
Previous and other funding	Provide details of grants held, role on the grant, amount awarded and whether the award paid for full salary.
Selected outputs	List prizes, awards, selected publications and conference abstracts, with a maximum of ten entries.
Narrative CV section 1	Contributions to new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge. For example, you could include: • how you communicated your ideas and results • key outputs, such as data sets, software, research and policy publications • skills acquired from past research projects
Narrative CV section 2	Development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships. For example, you could include: • expertise you provided that was critical to the team's success • teaching activities, workshops and mentoring • your leadership in shaping the direction of a team
Narrative CV section 3	Contributions to the wider research and innovation community. Examples of what you could include are:

Area	Guidance
	• positions of responsibility • commitments such as reviewing, editing and committee work • your strategic leadership in influencing a research agenda
Narrative CV section 4	Contributions to broader research and innovation users, audiences and wider societal benefit. Examples of what you could include are: • how you've engaged with the public sector, clients and the wider public • research which has contributed to public understanding • research which has contributed to policy development

7.4 Letter of Support

Written by the previous supervisor and submitted directly to the Programme Manager Tim Giles (t.giles@bham.ac.uk) the letter of support should include the following:

- How they know and supervised the applicant.
- Ability, independence and track record of the applicant.
- Why they have the potential to become an independent researcher.
- The applicants skills in collaboration, leadership and communication.
- Why the fellowship is the right next step.

7.5 Ethics Declaration Checklist

Please complete the online form which can be found here: [MOBILITY Ethics checklist – Fill in form](#). Please note you are able to download your responses to this form. Please upload this along with the other application documents as part of your submission.

7.6 Motivation letter

The motivation letter template must be completed in Arial 11pt and must not exceed two pages. It should explain why the applicant is applying for MOBILITY and how the fellowship connects to their longer-term career plans.

- Explain what has motivated the application and why now is the right time for this fellowship.
- What is it about the University's research environment that makes it the right place for your research and career development?
- Set out personal and career development objectives, including the transition the applicant wants the fellowship to support.
- Identify activities that will enhance the applicant's academic profile.
- Describe planned collaborations beyond the higher education sector where relevant.
- Identify training needs or gaps the fellowship would help address.

8. Assessment and selection

MOBILITY will recruit fellows through an open, transparent and merit-based process aligned with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment. Selection will be supported by external peer review and gender-balanced panels, and appointments will be based solely on excellence and research potential.

The MOBILITY selection process will be based on the principles of excellence, transparency, fairness, impartiality and confidentiality, in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The process will be managed by the MOBILITY Programme Manager and chaired by the Programme Director, working with the Board of Directors.

Applications will first be checked for eligibility after the call closes. Eligible applications will then be reviewed remotely by a Review Panel, with each proposal assessed by three reviewers: two external reviewers and one internal reviewer who has not been involved in the application. Reviewers will assess applications against the published criteria and any conflicts of interest will be declared and managed before review.

The Programme Manager will collate and validate reviewer scores and feedback under the supervision of the Board of Directors. Applications will then be ranked by average score, and those meeting the required threshold will be invited to interview. The number of candidates invited to interview will be between three and four times the number of fellowships available.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an online interview with the Interview Panel. The interview will generate a second score, based on the interview assessment criteria and agreed following a panel consensus discussion. Final ranking will be based on the interview score. The Board of Directors will validate the final outcome, and fellowships will be offered to the highest-ranked candidates in order. A reserve list will also be established in case any candidates withdraw.

All candidates will receive a summary assessment at the end of the process, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of their application based on Review Panel and Interview Panel comments. Unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback and will have the opportunity to appeal or seek clarification about the panel's decision.

Proposed timeline

- Call opens 1st October
- Deadline 18th December
- Review period and shortlisting January & February 2027
- Shortlisting decisions March 2027
- Interviews April 2027
- Fellowships start by September 2027

Applicants should therefore make sure the application provides enough evidence for reviewers and panel members to assess the proposed project, the applicant's potential, the fit with the programme and the value of the training and career development plan.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be assessed across the three criteria outlined below:

- **Excellence (50%)**, focusing on the quality of the research proposal.
- **Competence (30%)**, focusing on candidates ability to demonstrate sound analytical ability, organisational skills, and leadership.

- **Motivation (20%)**, which assesses the relevance of the MOBILITY programme with their current career stage and the strategies to develop impact beyond the scope of the fellowship.

The table below provides examples of the aspects reviewers will consider under each criterion.

Excellence (50% weighting)	Competence (30% weighting)	Motivation (20% weighting)
Research objectives are highly ambitious, forward-thinking, and demonstrate originality and innovation. Proposal introduces novel concepts or methods beyond standard practice. The research has strong potential to advance knowledge/practice in the discipline. The methodology must be scientifically robust, and where possible, interdisciplinary. Are the research aims clearly articulated and logically structured. Are the goals realistically achievable within the timeframe of the fellowship.	Demonstrates advanced analytical skills and problem-solving ability. Ability to convey complex information clearly and effectively. Proficiency in methodology but also demonstrates capacity to develop new skills. Skill in planning, organising, and coordinating work. Understanding of ethical considerations relevant to the research. Demonstrates awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion and research integrity appropriate to career stage.	Is the fellowship relevant to their career stage and are they showing clear signs of future development including new skills acquisition. A clear vision for career development beyond the fellowship and maximising the long-term impact of the research Plans for engaging relevant stakeholders for maximum impact. Evidence of genuine enthusiasm and commitment to research goals and career development, of themselves and others.

During the interviews, panel members will be asked to assess candidates based on the criteria shown below. The interviews will be followed by a final ranking meeting to review assessments and produce the final ranking of candidates based on interview scores. Equal weight is put on the potential of the candidate and the proposed research project by the candidate. This is to acknowledge the early career stage of the candidates and give opportunity to excellent candidates that may not have had strong support and mentoring before the application to write the best proposal.

Research proposal (50% weighting)	Candidate potential (50% weighting)
The scientific vision of the project should be demonstrated through the quality and novelty of the research, supported by an effective work plan. Are the research aims clearly articulated and logically structured. Are the goals realistically achievable within the timeframe of the fellowship.	How does the candidate demonstrate potential through their scientific vision, including the quality and novelty of their proposed research. How do their technical capabilities, career development plans and experience in their field support their suitability for the programme.

Keep the application self-contained

All information that should be considered should be included in the submitted documents and within the stated page limits. Do not rely on reviewers searching for additional information elsewhere.

When uploading documents please use the naming format:

surname_application_form

surname_support_letter

surname_cv

surname_motivation_letter

9. Applicant checklist

	Item	What to check
☐	Eligibility checked	I meet the degree, career stage, nationality and MSCA mobility requirements.
☐	Research remit	My project is within molecular biodiscovery and aligns with Discovery, Understanding and/or Engineering.
☐	UoB fit	I have identified the most appropriate University of Birmingham department and explained the fit with facilities, expertise and environment.
☐	Application form	I have used the template, completed all sections and kept within five pages.
☐	Lay summary	The lay summary is no more than 300 words and can be understood by a non-specialist audience.
☐	Technical summary	The technical summary is no more than 300 words and is clear to a broad scientific audience.
☐	Project plan	The project plan covers aims, methodology, added value, interdisciplinarity, UoB fit, secondments/training visits, outputs and a Gantt chart.
☐	Letter of Support	The Letter of Support needs to be sent to the Programme Manager Tim Giles (t.giles@bham.ac.uk).
☐	CV	I have used the CV template, followed the narrative CV sections and kept within four pages.
☐	Motivation letter	I have used the motivation letter template and kept within two pages.
☐	Ethics declaration	I have completed the ethics declaration. Ensure you upload a copy of this along with the other application documents.
☐	Formatting	All required documents use Arial 11pt and follow the template requirements.

	Item	What to check
☐	Submission	I have uploaded all required documents through the University of Birmingham online portal before the deadline.

10. Frequently asked questions

How long are the awards?

Each MOBILITY award uses a 3+2 model, where three years are funded by the ERC and the final two years are funded by the University of Birmingham. Awardees will be supported to apply for external fellowships and, if successful, will be expected to move onto these as soon as possible.

Do I need to contact the host labor department before submission?

No. There is no need to contact the host lab before submitting an application. However, applicants must explain how the chosen department is the best fit for the research, including facilities, expertise and research environment.

Do I need to include a letter of support?

Yes, each applicant needs to have a letter of support. The supervisor is expected to submit this directly to the MOBILITY programme manager.

Will I have access to research expenses?

Yes. Each MOBILITY fellow will have up to £10,000 in research expenses per annum. This may be used for direct research costs, facility access charges, equipment costs, and attendance at conferences and training events.

Can applicants be from any nationality?

Yes. The MOBILITY Fellowship is open to researchers of all nationalities, provided they meet the other eligibility requirements, including the MSCA mobility rule.

Can I apply if I hold a permanent research position?

No. Applicants must not hold a permanent research position

Can my project combine more than one MOBILITY pillar?

Yes. This would be completely acceptable. Please just explain how your research fits across the different pillars and why you have selected the host department.

Can I apply for additional research expenses funding?

Yes, the College of Medicine and Health has internal pump-priming schemes for Early Career Researchers that they can apply for. This is called the Research Development Fund and runs twice annually.

Can I supervise PhD or Masters students?

Yes, but only as second supervisor for PhD students.

11. Contact details

For queries about the programme, applicants should contact the programme inbox and include MOBILITY in the subject line: cmhfellowshipacademy@contacts.bham.ac.uk