



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

An Overview of Fellowship Opportunities

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What is a Fellowship?



- A Fellowship is an individual award covering your salary, research and travel expenses, consumables, etc
- They are **key stepping stones** towards independent research careers and permanent academic position
- Highly competitive, prestigious, and attractive to Universities (your time is paid!)
- I will give a brief overview of opportunities and some comments on the process
- There is always a **stochastic** component to applications... elements of luck are part of the game

- Early Career Postdoctoral Research Fellowships (~ 2-3 years in duration)
 - These are usually **not sufficient** to negotiate tenure track positions
 - They **will** put you on the right path: use resources to build portfolio for your next career move
- Examples
 - UKRI Stephen Hawking Fellowship (~ 4 years)
 - Marie-Curie Fellowship
 - Leverhulme Trust (Early Career Fellowships)
 - Royal Commission of 1851 (remit can vary, typically engineering dominated)
 - Field specific? CERN? DESY? University schemes?
 - (Inter)National Schemes: NASA Hubble, Veni, Humboldt, DFG Research Fellowships, etc

- Early Career Research Fellowships (~ 5+ years in duration)
 - These **are sufficient** to negotiate tenure track positions*
 - Provide the resources and funding to establish an **independent research group**
- Examples
 - Royal Society University Research Fellowship
 - UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (also open to junior faculty)
 - ERC Starting Grant
 - STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellowship / EPSRC Fellowship / MRC Fellowships
 - (Inter)National Schemes: Vidi, Vici, Emmy Noether Programme,

Funder	Call	PhD	Postdoctoral	New PI	Mid-Career PI	Senior PI
Euro. Comm.	ERC Advanced					
	ERC Consolidator				7 to 12 Years post-PhD	
	ERC Starting		2 to 7 Years post-PhD	2 to 7 Years post-PhD		
UKRI	Marie Curie	PhD at time	< 8 Years Exp.			
	ERF/EPSRC/MRC					
Royal Soc.	Future Leaders Fel.					
	URF		3 to 8 Years post-PhD			
Leverhulme	Dorothy Hodgkin		< 6 Years post-PhD			
	ECF					
	RF					
Royal Comm.	RLA					
	Fellowship		< 3 Years PDRA			

- Fellowships are often advertised on **strict annual cycles** - give yourself plenty of time
- Due dates often over summer - exactly when academics travel - feedback will take time(!)
- Schemes may have University-level **restrictions**
 - Find out about internal deadlines and the (pre-)application process!
- Writing a fellowship is **significant investment** of your time and career
 - Expect to spend over a month writing an ERF/URF application
 - Expect to iterate on the proposal numerous times following feedback
 - Process can take up to a year... make sure you have career plans!
 - Submission has to jump through many hoops (think finance office) - do not leave to the last minute

- You need a unique **research vision**... which means understanding your field
 - Needless to say, **hard to have a vision if you work in a bubble**...
- You are not selling the “research papers” but **the vision** to the funding body
 - Why is your research driving innovation in your field? [the proposal]
 - Why are you the right person to deliver this? [the person]
 - Why have you chosen your host institution? [the place]
- Temptation to think a research project is only a brilliant / novel idea
 - Need a healthy mix of safe (high-impact) work and ground-breaking (i.e. risky + novel) work
 - Always outline risk assessment + mitigation in your proposal
- No jargon or acronyms! Panels can be incredibly diverse and may not be experts in your field...

- Read the guidelines
 - Make sure that you understand any limitations: page size, font, eligibility, age, location, ...
- What does the funding body want? Scope of research? Type of profile? Funding strategy?
- Peer support network is crucial (like this event)
 - Why have colleagues been (un)successful? Tips? Insight? Wisdom?
- Critical (and brutal) self-reflection
 - Does your profile fit the aim and ambition of the fellowship scheme?
 - Do you have the right leadership roles in your community?
 - High-profile / high-impact research? You need a track record with a strong trajectory...

- Do **not** underestimate the time commitment for writing the full application
 - CV, publication list, lay summary, data management plan, public engagement strategy, etc
- Fellowships will have a transformative impact on your career - treat them as such
- Often provided an opportunity to sell your profile as an independent researcher
 - What are your key publications - why are you known in your field and what are you driving?
 - What leadership roles do you have? Organisation? Funding?
- Often have to construct a budget... this can be time consuming if you have never done so before

- Understand **the format**
 - Are you allowed a presentation? 5-minute overview talk?
- Be enthusiastic, be engaging, show that you love your field of research
 - Rare chance to sell your project and yourself to the panel
 - Rare chance to actually take a step back and reflect
- Hard to predict the nature of the questions but **prepare** a range of answer
 - Research and technical questions? Or questions on you as an individual?
 - Coordinate with the University team to arrange mock interviews - brutal but incredibly formative!