

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be regularly updated to reflect those questions most frequently raised with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Potential applicants, and their host organisations, should review this document before contacting the UKRI for advice.

To allow us to effectively monitor the type and number of queries received, and to update this document to reflect them, we would encourage all queries to be e-mailed to fellows@ukri.org.

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Introduction

What is the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme?

This is a new UKRI-wide fellowship scheme aimed at recruiting and retaining the rising stars of research and innovation, attracting the brightest and best from at home and across the world. These prestigious awards will offer four or seven years of funding for early career researchers and innovators, addressing a known pinch-point in research career paths.

These awards will support movement of talented researchers and innovators between business and academia, welcoming proposals with strong links to business. With recruitment co-ordinated across UK Research and Innovation, we will enable candidates to take cross-cutting and interdisciplinary approaches, ensuring the development of future research and innovation excellence in the UK.

Is it new funding or is funding being reallocated from council budgets?

The funding for the FLF scheme is provided through the National Productivity Investment Fund announced at the Autumn Statement 2016, which provided an additional £4.7 billion R&D funding by 2020-21.

This scheme is in addition to existing schemes and will not change the baseline commitments in Councils to talent and skills activities.

How many fellowships will be supported?

We currently anticipate six rounds over the next 3 years, typically awarding at least 200 fellows each year.

What will this funding achieve?

The aim of the FLFs is to develop the next generation of research and innovation leaders. By recruiting and retaining the rising stars in research and innovation, from anywhere in the world, this scheme will help maintain the UK's position as a world-leader in research and innovation.

How is this different to existing Fellowships schemes?

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme will provide long-term support, for four or seven years, in order to enable fellows to tackle ambitious programmes or multidisciplinary questions and new or emerging research areas and partnerships. It is the first UKRI-wide investment and will provide assessment and support across UKRI's remit, with no barriers to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation. In order to support

excellent research and innovation wherever it arises and to facilitate movement of people and projects between sectors, Future Leaders Fellows can be based in Universities, businesses, or other eligible independent research organisations. Finally to ensure the successful development of the fellow, Future Leaders Fellowships come with a requirement for the host organisation to commit significant institutional support which, for fellows in academia, includes a commitment to a follow-on position by or at the end of the fellowship, subject to satisfactory progress.

Do proposals have to be multidisciplinary or with business?

Not necessarily but applicants will need to demonstrate their potential to be a future leader of research/innovation and why an FLF fellowship will have a demonstrable impact on their career trajectory beyond what they could achieve through other grant or fellowship schemes.

What would be the benefit for a business collaborating in a Fellowship?

Within the UKRI FLF scheme, innovation projects will be those that aim to move research through the development pathway towards commercialisation and/or application. Many innovation Fellowships will involve close collaboration between academic and business organisations in anticipation of the business, in due course, being directly involved in the commercialisation of any intellectual property arising from the Fellowship. For these Fellowships, the collaborating parties will be required to have in place a mutually acceptable collaboration agreement at the outset of the Fellowship, giving due regard to the appropriate protection of any arising IP and ensuring the most effective routes to exploitation, which have the potential to achieve maximum benefit for the UK economy and wider society. An example of this can be found in the [Lambert toolkit](#).

What would be the benefit for a business putting forward a candidate?

A business might choose to put forward its own candidate for a Fellowship, to undertake business-related innovation; for example, helping the company to develop and embed new sector or technology expertise, a new business model, take the business in a new direction or open up new markets. Projects might involve the validation of concepts, systems or components in an appropriate research or market environment; development or refinement of a system model or prototyping. The Fellowship will comprise a self-contained project, above and beyond the normal activity of the host business, with a higher than normal level of technical and/or commercial risk in order to benefit from the award of public funding.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

Applicants will be hosted by organisations that are able to apply to the Research Councils and Innovate UK. There are no eligibility rules based on years since PhD, the guidance for applicants details the eligibility criteria to ensure individuals are hosted in an environment that can support them and a person specification that describes the competencies of the individuals applying.

These fellowships are for early career academics and innovators, senior academics are not permitted to apply. As the FLF aims to enable the fellow to transition to or establish their research/innovation independence, applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence (e.g. by securing funding aimed at this career stage) will not be competitive.

Applicants should use the person specification to assess and justify their suitability for the scheme with reference to the stated objectives of the FLF programme.

Please see section 2.2 of the overview of the scheme for further information on the person specification:

<https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/flf-overview-of-the-scheme/>.

Can UKRI confirm my eligibility before I apply?

No, applicants must demonstrate how they meet the person specification as part of their application.

Can I apply if I hold a permanent academic or research position, or an award that supports my salary?

Yes, as long as you relinquish your post for the duration of the fellowship. Applicants cannot continue to hold an existing position and a fellowship at the same time.

All applicants must articulate why a fellowship is the best way to achieve their research/innovation goals. Individuals who currently hold a permanent position are eligible to apply if they can

- Demonstrate that a fellowship would be the best way to support their long term career goals and chosen career route.
- Provide a clear rationale why a fellowship would be different to their current role. As part of this expectation, applicants may be planning to move away from their current department, or will describe clear pathways by which they will differentiate the fellowship position from their current role.
- Clearly state that 100% of their working time would be dedicated to the fellowship to focus on research, shielded from other professional commitments.

The guidance states that those currently employed on open-ended contract must relinquish their contract in order to apply, what does that mean?

Anyone currently employed on an open-ended contract must relinquish the roles associated with that post in order to free up their time to meet the full working time commitment required by these fellowships.

If fellows with substantial ongoing research commitments as a result of participation in other grants are ineligible to apply, what do you mean by 'substantial'?

Fellows in receipt of full-time awards would not be expected to be spending more than in the region of six hours a week (pro-rated for part-time fellows) on these other commitments (or undertaking up to two sessions a week in the case of clinical fellows) during the first two years of the fellowship. Awardees will have the flexibility to develop a breadth of experience and partnerships, and secure further research/innovation funding later in the award, but should ensure that these other activities do not compromise their focus, or achievement of the aims of the fellowship.

When can I apply?

We are anticipating two rounds per year for the next three years. The first round will close on the 3 July 2018. We anticipate awarding 50 fellowships who will all need to start by the 1 May 2019. The second larger round, awarding 100 fellows, will close in October 2018.

Can fellowships be hosted by research Council institutes/centres/laboratories?

Yes, fellows can apply to be based in Research Council institutes, laboratories and Innovate UK Catapults. Please see section 3, host organisation eligibility, in the [overview of the scheme](#) for further information.

Can fellowships be hosted by overseas institutes (such as CERN)?

No, applications must be submitted from UK institutions eligible for Research Council funding or organisations eligible to apply to Innovate UK. However, as long as they are hosted by an eligible UK-based organisation, fellows can spend extended periods overseas if it can be clearly justified in terms of their programme of work and meets the overarching aims of the scheme.

In addition, we encourage applicants to consider spending time in other internationally leading research or innovation organisations – either in the UK or abroad – for the purpose of training, collaboration and/or access to data or other resources not available at the applicant's host organisation.

Can I apply to the Future Leaders Fellowships and also to an individual research Council Fellowship scheme?

Applicants cannot submit to Research Council fellowship competitions running in parallel to FLF calls unless explicitly permitted within the Research Council fellowships call information. Applicants are not permitted to submit to parallel rounds of the FLF scheme.

Can I submit the same proposal to the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme and to another non-Research Council scheme (Royal Society, for example)?

Yes.

Can I submit multiple applications to the same call if they're through different organisations?

No, you can only submit one application per call and cannot re-apply until the outcome of any earlier applications is known.

I am just completing my PhD, am I eligible to apply?

Yes although you will have to address the same eligibility criteria as all other applicants and provide evidence that you are on a trajectory to become a leading researcher or innovator.

Do I need to have a PhD to apply?

No. Applicants are expected to hold a doctorate by the start date of the fellowship or to be able to demonstrate equivalent research experience and/or training. You must have a level of skills, knowledge and experience appropriate to the nature of the proposed project.

Can I apply for a fellowship to be held on a part-time basis?

Future Leaders Fellowships may be held on a part-time basis in order to combine research with personal or domestic responsibilities, this could include job shares.

It is expected that fellows' working time will be committed to these fellowships and therefore those with substantial current grants would be ineligible to apply.

I am planning to return to my research career following a break – am I eligible to apply?

Yes, applications are welcome from those returning to research from a career break or following time in non-research roles. We also encourage applications from those wishing to work part-time in order to combine the fellowship with personal or domestic responsibilities.

Please see the guidance on career breaks and flexible working for further information:
<https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/fff-career-breaks-and-flexible-working/>

What do you mean by job shares?

Job sharing is a form of flexible working which enables two employees to voluntarily share the responsibilities and duties of one full time job. Therefore individuals applying for a job share fellowship would be expected to be sharing one full time position on this basis for the duration of the fellowship. Job share fellowships are intended to allow the applicants to combine research with personal or domestic responsibilities. They are not intended to allow applicants to 'share' a fellowship project in order to complete the fellowship alongside other working commitments related to their role where this would mean that they are not committing the majority of their working hours to the fellowship.

Can you apply if you currently hold University fixed term support (like Edinburgh's Chancellors fellows)?

Yes, as long as there is not overlap between the two awards.

What terms and conditions will apply?

The RCUK Terms and Conditions will apply for applicants based at organisations eligible for research council funding. For applicants eligible for funding from Innovate UK, please see the general guidance for applicants available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/innovate-uk-funding-general-guidance-for-applicants>

Funding and resources

Is there a maximum amount I can apply for?

No, but applications exceeding £1.2m must be discussed UKRI office staff in advance.

Please note that all costs must be clearly broken down and justified in terms of your proposed programme of work. Costs that haven't been adequately justified may be reduced or removed before an award is made.

Is the £1.2m at 80% or 100% FEC?

It's £1.2m at 80% FEC.

What will the Fellowship provide?

The costs you claim must be appropriate for the programme of activities you are proposing. In addition to your own salary, and that of any research staff you plan to employ, you can include costs directly related to your proposed programme of activities.

What is the commitment required from the host institution?

All applications must demonstrate significant support for the fellow from their hosting organisation or organisations including a contribution to the cost of the fellowship as detailed in the guidance for applicants. In addition, for applicants from academic host organisations, it must include a commitment to an open ended UK based independent research or innovation position for the fellow, to be taken up by, and extending beyond, the end of the fellowship period. Academic organisations will be asked to set out a general approach at the time of applications and those successful in securing the full seven years of funding will be asked, at the 4 year review stage, how and when the fellow will be considered for an open-ended position; if successful at securing a further period of FLF funding.

How does the commitment to the funded Fellows from academic institutions fit with the employers current policies - for example for open recruitment processes?

UKRI recognises that research employers differ in their employment policies and practices: an effective commitment to, and support for, Fellows can be achieved by several different means. For example, the path to an open-ended role may involve open advertisement – which is acceptable provided this is for a position in the right subject area, at a suitable level and at the appropriate time. We also recognise that employers' assessment of individuals' suitability for an open ended contract will be broad; and take into account factors other than their research progress. Fellows will still be subject to standard organisational policies which may include probation periods on appointment and performance review practices throughout the lifetime of the fellowship and beyond.

Will the fellowships be costed under the Full Economic Costing (FEC) model?

For applicants eligible for Research Council funding, proposals should be costed using the FEC model. For applicants eligible for funding from Innovate UK, proposals should be costed utilising the provided template for business costs.

Please see Annex 1 (State Aid) and Annex 2 (Full Economic Costing) of the guidance on completing the application form for more information:

<https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/flf-completing-the-application-form/>

Can I apply for less than four years?

No, the minimum duration for all applications is four years.

Do I have to apply for the full seven years?

No, there is no need to apply for a further three years of funding if this is not required.

Can I include a co-investigator on my application?

Yes but co-investigators should only be included where they clearly bring complementary and different skills to the project. For each co-investigator included, clearly define and justify their limited role in the project within the Case for Support.

Focus of the fellowships

Do proposals have to be aligned to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund?

No. The ambition of the FLF scheme is to build the leaders of research and innovation required to deliver long term growth for the UK, but proposals are not limited to specific published challenge themes.

Can I use a Future Leaders Fellowship to move into a new research and/or innovation area?

Yes, you can however you will need to clearly articulate the benefits of doing so and how this will enhance your career trajectory.

Can I use a Future Leaders Fellowship to move between sectors?

Yes. In addition, we would welcome innovative approaches to intersectoral mobility which might include secondments, placements, rotational appointments, reverse mentoring and non-academic mentors along with opportunities for professional experience that would complement more generic approaches to training and development. Any training and support required to enable this should be clearly articulated in the application.

Mentors/Sponsors

Do I have to have a mentor?

No, it's not mandatory to have a mentor.

Can I cost my mentor's time commitment as part of my application?

No, mentors are not expected to request funds to support their time as part of a FLF application but costs may be requested to support their engagement with the fellowship (e.g. nominal travel and subsistence costs).

Application process

If this is a UKRI scheme, why do I have to apply through the MRC?

This is very much a UKRI-wide scheme and applications will be accepted from, and processed across, the entire UKRI remit. However, to meet current system capabilities, the Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) scheme, the MRC was selected as the host funder for this specific UKRI FLF funding opportunity.

When is the closing date for applications?

We are planning two calls a year for the next three years. The closing date for round one is 16.00 (British Summer Time) on 3 July 2018. Proposals that are not submitted by this date and time will not be accepted for process and will have to submit to the next call.

The closing dates for future rounds will be published in due course.

Assessment process

How will applicants be selected?

Future Leaders Fellowship applicants will be assessed by a two stage review process consisting of (1) written peer review by sector/discipline experts and (2) shortlisting and interview by a panel of senior decision makers. All councils and Innovate UK will be involved

in delivery of peer review including collaborating on reviewer selection for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary proposals.

Please see the [overview of the peer review](#) process for further information.

Will each organisation within UKRI be allocated a proportion of the budget to support fellows with their remit?

There will be no ring-fencing for specific areas. However, UKRI will monitor the overall portfolio balance in the longer term with potential for light-touch targeting to strengthen a few broad priority areas in the portfolio in future.

How important is the impact of the research and/or innovation that will form the basis of a Future Leaders Fellowship?

We expect that any researcher or innovator intending to apply to this scheme to be able to explain how the proposed research / innovation and its potential impact contributes to, or helps maintain the health of other research disciplines, or contributes to addressing key UK societal challenges, or current or future UK economic success and / or enables future development of key emerging business, relative to other, similar research in the field.

What are the assessment criteria?

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Research and innovation excellence
- Applicant and their development
- Impact and strategic relevance
- Research and innovation environment and costs

For further information, please see the guidance provided on the UKRI website:

<https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/flf-assessment-criteria/>

Will there be separate assessment criteria for Fellows based in business and academia?

No, the criteria will be the same but the evidence assessors would expect to see would vary as appropriate for the proposed programme of activities.

Resubmissions

If I'm unsuccessful, can I apply to future rounds?

Unsuccessful applicants can reapply to subsequent FLF calls and will be assessed alongside all other applications to that call without bias. Reapplications must include substantive change / development from the original submission, addressing feedback from reviewers and, if applicable, the panel.

Applicants cannot apply before reviewers' comments, and if applicable, panel feedback has been received

Can I re-apply with the same proposal?

Applicants resubmitting to the scheme are required to demonstrate within their covering letter that they have made substantive amendments to their proposal between submissions

to address issues raised by assessors. This information will not be shared with reviewers but will be available to panel members at both the sift and interview stages

Monitoring and evaluation

How will UKRI monitor and evaluate the fellowships?

UKRI is currently developing the detailed plans on how these awards will be monitored and evaluated and these will be published in due course.

We are keen to ensure that we support cohorts of fellows with whom we'll continue to engage beyond the end of their funding.

Are there plans to bring the fellows together?

Whilst this aspect of the scheme is being developed we are keen to ensure that fellows have the opportunity to come face-to-face to exchange learning points, develop networks and the broader professional community as well as learn about the research and innovation underway across the cohorts and sectors.