UK Research and Innovation

Future Leaders Fellowships: Reviewers' Guidance

Version 9 – July 2021

Change Log

Ver.	Details
9	Section 1.2 - How the scheme differs from existing fellowship schemes – Updated with additional information Section 3.7 – Language – Added Section 6 – What happens next – Added Annex A – Assessment Criteria – Added Annex D – Overview of the Assessment Criteria – Added Annex E – How to Write a Good Review – Added Annex F – Applying for a Fellowship on Job-Share Basis – Added Annex G – Career breaks and flexible working – Added
8	3.6 Added further guidance on the impact of Covid-19 for Round 6

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1. The Future Leaders Fellowships Scheme

1.1. Overview

The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme will support early career researchers and innovators with outstanding potential in universities, UK registered businesses, and other research and user environments including recognised Independent Research Organisations (IROs), and Research Councils' institutes and laboratories. The objectives of the scheme are:

- To develop, retain, attract and sustain research and innovation talent in the UK
- To foster new research and innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries, and facilitate movement of people between sectors
- To provide sustained funding and resources for the best early career researchers and innovators
- To provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle difficult and novel challenges, and support adventurous, ambitious programmes.

Fellowships are not restricted to work that would be seen as formal research in their area but can also lead and develop innovation. Innovation is defined as the practical translation of disruptive ideas into novel, relevant and valued products, services, processes, systems or business models, making them readily available to markets, government and society.

Innovation means creating economic and/or social value from ideas. Within the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme, innovation projects will be those that aim to move research through the development pathway towards commercialisation and/or application.

1.2. How the scheme differs from existing fellowship schemes

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme will provide long-term support, for four to seven years, to enable fellows to tackle ambitious programmes or multidisciplinary questions, and new or emerging research and innovation 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/innovation.

These are personal awards to support fellows develop as impactful and influential research or innovation leaders and support applicants from diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles. Successful applicants will have the intellectual and financial freedom to develop and change direction over this period, subject to approval from UKRI.

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. To ensure the successful development of the fellow, Future Leaders Fellowships come with a requirement for the Host Organisation to commit significant support. For fellows in academia, this includes the commitment to providing an open-ended UK based independent research/innovation position, to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices).

Fellows and host organisations benefit from a flexible scheme that allows part-time working and job share; the opportunity to network and collaborate with talented researchers and innovators from different disciplines and sectors, and time and investment in training and professional development.

Applicants are encouraged to think broadly about the type of activities they may pursue as part of their

research and/or innovation objectives. This could include time for work in other environments, developing international links, and development of new skills.

Applicants should also consider what career development support opportunities are appropriate, for example mentoring and professional training and development, and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning.

2. Principles of Peer Review

Peer review is governed by several underlying principles, including those of integrity, confidentiality and anonymity.

2.1. Integrity

The integrity of peer review is of paramount importance. This means that any personal interests as a reviewer must never influence or be seen to influence the outcome of the review.

Please see Annex B for further details on conflicts of interest.

Please contact the office prior to completing a review if you are unsure whether there is a conflict of interest.

2.2. Confidentiality

Our assessment process is confidential in order to protect the innovative research ideas proposed by the applicants. All reviews are processed via the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system to ensure this confidentiality. When you agree to review for UKRI you are bound by a confidentiality agreement, either through the Je-S terms and conditions and reviewer protocol or a standalone agreement.

This means that everything we send you is confidential and must be treated as such at all times. You must not discuss or share the proposal with anyone. If you do not consider that you have the expertise to provide a useful review, without discussing it with a colleague for example, you should decline the invitation. When reviewing proposals, it is important that reviewers avoid storing confidential UKRI data on their local IT system, computer or mobile device.

2.3. Anonymity

Peer Review is anonymous to support the free and frank exchange of views. You should ensure that you do not inadvertently identify yourself in the text of your review, for example by describing aspects of your own research or by identifying where you have worked. All comments made should be suitable to be fed back to the applicant without alteration. Any information entered into the 'Declaration of Interests' and 'Reviewer Expertise' sections will be removed before the review is shared with the applicant but will be available to the Panel.

2.4. Information Rights Legislation

All information we hold, including information around peer review, is subject to the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). All requests are considered on a case by case basis and in some cases, it might be necessary to seek your view on releasing information relating to the review you have provided.

Further information on how the peer review process is used by UKRI to make funding decisions and how information relating to peer review and the funding of proposals is managed by UKRI is

available on the UKRI website.

3. Considerations when completing a Review

Your review must be evidence-based and the evidence used should be stated clearly in your comments. In order to ensure that your review is as useful as possible to both the applicant and panel please:

- Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria and scoring matrix before you begin.
- Provide clear comments and recommendations that justify, and are consistent with, your scores.
- Ensure that your comments are comprehensive and concise, clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the application in a constructive manner and raise any concerns in the form of questions for the applicant.
- Avoid the use of jargon, bearing in mind that the panellists who rely on your review for their decisions may not be specialists in your field.

We also ask reviewers to consider other aspects of the research and/or innovation, including the potential impact and the pathways to achieving this impact, ethical issues, appropriate use of animals and/or human tissue, methodology and experimental design and data management plans.

Guidance on animal usage can be found in Annex C.

3.1. Bias

You must avoid bias in your assessment including on the grounds of a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion/belief, sex or sexual orientation. Before writing a review, you should familiarise yourself with UKRI's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

3.2. Journal Impact Factors

We are committed to support the recommendations and principles set out by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). You should not use journal-based metrics, such as journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

For the purpose of research assessment, please consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. You should consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-career applicants. Therefore, you should not use journal impact factor (or any hierarchy of journals), conference rankings and metrics such as the H-index or i10-index when assessing UKRI grants. Reviews that do not adhere to this may be returned for amendment and both the applicant and Panel will be asked to disregard these comments.

3.3. Career Break and Flexible Working

These fellowships support applicants from diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles. Proposals may also be from those wishing to work part-time in order to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities. Your review should

consider time spent outside an active research or innovation environment, whether through career breaks, flexible working or as a consequence of working in other roles. Further guidance can be found in Annex G.

3.4. Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be assessed according to the scheme's four Assessment Criteria:

- Research & Innovation Excellence
- Applicant & their Development
- Impact & Strategic Relevance
- Research and Innovation Environment & Costs

More details on each criteria can be found in Annex A.

Before writing your review, you should familiarise yourself with these criteria and ensure that each one is addressed at some point.

Across all four factors throughout the review, a key issue will be whether the added value of the fellowship mechanism of support– e.g. the scale, flexibility and duration offered – is well demonstrated, as opposed to more standard project grant support.

For business applications, consideration of the added value will include, for example, whether the novelty and levels of risk involved in the project mean that it is beyond the normal activity of the business.

3.5. Job Share Applications

Joint applications from those wishing to hold a Future Leaders Fellowship on a job-share basis are encouraged as one of the mechanisms through which UKRI supports applications from those wishing to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities. More information can be found in Annex F.

Please take the following into consideration when completing your review:

- Research & Innovation Excellence - This should include assessment of the applicants' joint track record in producing outstanding research or innovation. The proposed research or innovation activity should be a single coherent programme rather than separate activities.
- Applicant & their development - The applicants should both be recognised in their research/innovation community, as well as being ambassadors and advocates for their field. The applicants should both demonstrate how they intend to use the fellowship to develop as future leaders, noting that their roles may be split somewhat depending on how their team may be structured.
- Impact & Strategic Relevance - No further considerations.
- Research and Innovation Environment & Costs - The Head of Department's Supporting Statement from the host organisation should indicate that they are committed to supporting this joint arrangement and the careers of both applicants, as well as describing the commitment to open-ended positions for both applicants following completion of the fellowship. It should be clear how the fellowship and any associated staff will be jointly managed by the applicants.

3.6. Covid-19

UKRI recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities and are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career(s) such as breaks and delays, disruptive working patterns and conditions, the loss of on-going work, and role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic.

When undertaking your assessment of the research project, you should consider the unequal impacts of the impact that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the track record and career development of those individuals included in the proposal, and you should focus on the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing.

UKRI acknowledges that it is a challenge for applicants to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 while the pandemic continues to evolve. Applicants have been advised that their applications should be based on the information available at the point of submission and, if applicable, the known application specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for. Where known impacts have occurred, these should have been highlighted in the application, including the assumptions/information at the point of submission. Applicants were not required to include contingency plans for the potential impacts of COVID-19. Requests for travel both domestically and internationally could be included in accordance to the relevant scheme guidelines, noting the above advice.

When undertaking your assessment of the research project you should assess the project as written, noting that any changes that the project might require in the future, which arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, will be resolved as a post-award issue by UKRI if the project is successful. Potential complications related to COVID-19 should not affect your assessment or the score you give the project.

Applicants may have been unable to secure Letters of Support (LoS) associated with their application. In these situations an “FLF Missing Letter of Support Form” for each letter they have been unable to provide should be present. Reviewers must not disadvantage applicants who use this template and must presume that a LoS will be provided ahead of award for applicants who are recommended for funding.

3.7. Language

Please use plain English wherever possible and avoid using idioms or slang when writing your review. This is to help ensure inclusivity, recognising that English will not always be the first language of the candidate.

4. Completing the Review Form

This is a UKRI scheme, hosted by the Medical Research Council (MRC) for system purposes. Please ignore the MRC logo.

All sections of the review must be completed and all assessment factors in each section must be commented on. Do not enter 'N/A' for any section. Doing so may result in the review being returned to you for amendment or being considered unusable.

Advice on writing a good review can be found in Annex E.

4.1. Declaration of Interest

Before you complete a review, please ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest with the proposal. UKRI, as a publicly funded organisation, is accountable to the Government and the public for its actions and the way it conducts its business. UKRI has a conflicts of interest policy in place to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved in providing it with knowledge and advice and to reduce the risk of impropriety or any perception of impropriety. This section is not shared with the applicant.

Depending on the type of conflict, we may not be able to accept your review even if you declare it, so we request that you make yourself familiar with the policy available at Annex B and inform us as soon as possible if you have or suspect any conflicts of interest with the proposal you have been asked to review by email to fellowspeerreview@ukri.org.

4.2. Applicant, Training and Development

Please comment on the applicant considering their:

- **Track record and current research standing** – Whether they have a track record of producing challenging, original and productive research and/or innovation outputs that stand out in their field. and whether their current research and/or innovation standing relative to their career stage puts them on a trajectory to become world-class.
- **Expertise and skill set** – Whether they have the potential to progress to a long-term research and/or innovation career path and they understand the research and/or innovation landscape at both the national and international level.
- **Ability to carry out the proposed work** – Whether they have the necessary level of skills, knowledge and experience to take forward the proposed project/programme.
- **Training and development plans for themselves and, if applicable, for team members** – Whether they have identified opportunities to access career development support, mentorship and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning, supporting not only the programme but also their broader professional development and that of their team.
- **Leadership potential** – Whether they have demonstrated independence and thought leadership beyond the level normally expected of their current position and their ability to be, or become, a clear communicator and disseminator of knowledge and innovation, able to inspire and lead others; and their ability to develop new relationships and influence across multiple disciplines and sectors.
- **Proposed placements or collaborations** – Whether they have demonstrated the ability to choose and develop appropriate collaborations and networks nationally, internationally or across disciplines.

When assessing applicants undertaking their fellowship within a business, please also consider that:

- Applicants may not have a PhD and should not be penalised if this is the case, however applicants should be able to demonstrate equivalent experience.
- Applicants may not have a comparable publication record to an applicant from academia and may use their CV and Outputs list to demonstrate their involvement in trade publications, patents, etc. Business applicants should not be penalised if they have a limited number of or no publications or choose to use their CV and Outputs list to demonstrate alternative achievements as listed above.

4.3. Programme

Please comment on the importance, competitiveness and impact of the proposed research and innovation, including:

- **Strength of the research/innovation case** – The importance, novelty, feasibility and timeliness of the proposed programme of work and whether long-term fellowship support is needed to enable this. Whether the proposal aligns with a specific priority area identified by UKR and how strongly the proposal fits within the aims for the area and what it will contribute alongside other proposals and activities in the same priority area.
- **Level of innovation, and whether this is likely to lead to significant new understanding** – Whether the potential short and/or long-term impacts, and how significant they are, are well articulated and whether the fellowship has the potential to establish or maintain a distinctive and outstanding research and/or innovation activity.
- **Appropriateness and rigour of the methods and study designs** – Whether the methodology is robust and whether there is appropriate consideration of research and/or innovation reproducibility, openness, governance and ethical/social responsibility issues.
- **Whether the plans and scope of the programme justify long-term support** – Whether plans to achieve the aims of the fellowship are well understood and feasible and whether there is sufficient justification for the fellowship to achieve these aims above and beyond other funding options.
- **Potential economic and societal impact of the proposed research/innovation and plans to deliver this** – The importance and potential impact of the research and/or innovation for society and/or the economy and whether the plans for maximising impact (from the applicant and host organisation) are proportionate, timely and credible.

When assessing applicants undertaking their fellowship within a business, please also consider:

- Applicants may not be in a position to disclose commercially sensitive information and their proposal should not receive a lower score if this is the case. The excellence of the research and/or innovation must still be clearly conveyed.
- Business hosted fellowships may directly benefit the business and/or generate IP for business use; both outputs are acceptable under the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme and a business applicant should not be penalised in this situation.

4.4. Host Organisation

Please comment on the suitability of the host organisation(s) where the proposed Fellowship will be based, including:

- **Appropriateness for the work proposed** – Whether the proposed environment(s) for their research and/or innovation are suitable and will allow maximum impact.
- **Level of commitment from supervisors, mentors and host institution** – Whether the applicant has secured the backing of an institution that is prepared to host them/the business that employs them and whether the level of commitment to realising the potential of the fellow and establishing them as a research and/or innovation leader has been demonstrated by their supervisor(s), host institution(s) and, where applicable, mentor(s) (e.g. plans for supporting the fellow's programme of work; enabling the time commitment needed; ensuring access to space, equipment/facilities, other resources and other relevant programmes and ability to enable the applicant to maximise the social/economic impact of their work.). Whether consideration has been given to equality, diversity and inclusion aims of UKRI in support for the fellow and (where applicable) their wider team and in using the fellowship's provision for flexible working.
- **Opportunities for training and career development actively supported** – Whether the host organisation(s) have supported opportunities for development as impactful and influential research and/or innovation leaders (e.g. time for work in other environments, developing international links, development of new skills, mentoring and professional training and development, and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning).

4.5. Resources Requested

Please comment on:

- **Whether funds requested are appropriately justified to deliver the proposed project, highlighting any costs that you feel may be excessive, inappropriate or insufficiently justified** – Whether all funds have been addressed in the Justification of Resources and whether the justification for these funds is clearly described and appropriate.
- **Whether the proposal demonstrates value for money in terms of the resources requested** – Whether funds requested for the first four years for the project plan and management arrangements are proportionate to the scale and complexity of the activity to be undertaken.
- **Whether any animal use is fully justified in terms of need, species, number and conformance to guidelines** – Refer to Annex C for information.

When assessing applicants undertaking their fellowship within a business, please also consider:

- Business hosted applications are subject to different funding regulations to academic hosted applications. You should not comment or score an application based on the percentage contribution requested as this is pre-determined by legal requirements.
- Business hosted applications do no enter their costings in Je-S when submitting their application. Instead, business-based applicants will have completed a 'Finance Form for Business Applicants' to indicate their costings.

4.6. Ethics and Data Management

Please comment on any ethical and/or research governance issues, including:

- **Whether the proposed research/innovation is ethically acceptable in relation to risks to humans, animals or the environment** – Whether there are any ethical considerations that have not been adequately addressed including (where applicable): the need to use animals and lack of realistic alternatives; evaluation of the scientific strengths and weaknesses of proposed animal use, and plans to obtain ethical approval from the relevant bodies.
- **If applicable, whether the Data Management Plan indicates the applicants have a sound plan for managing the data funded through the award and in the long-term** – Whether the plans for data management in the first 4/7 years and beyond have been sufficiently considered and are feasible including: the methodologies for data collection/generation; storing and curating data; data repository, and suitability for sharing.

When assessing applicants undertaking their fellowship within a business, please also consider:

- Businesses hosted applicants may be under commercial constraints with regard to data sharing. An applicant should not be penalised for abiding by their organisational policies and practices on data management.

4.7. Relevance to the Aims of this Scheme

Please comment on how this proposal meets the scheme specific criteria including:

- Whether the proposal develops, retains, attracts or sustains research and/or innovation talent in the UK.
- Whether the proposal fosters new research and/or innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries.
- Whether the proposal facilitates the movement of people between disciplines, organisations or sectors.
- Whether the proposal would provide sustained funding and resources to a world-class, early career researcher and/or innovator.
- Whether the proposal would provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle a difficult and novel challenge and support an adventurous, ambitious programme.

4.8. Reviewer Expertise

Recognising the potential multidisciplinary nature of the applications, you should, without specifically identifying yourself, comment on your areas of expertise and experience and indicate whether you have provided comment on the whole of the application or specific portions, indicating which sections of the proposal you have provided comment on. This section is not shared with the applicant.

For business applications, if you do not feel able to confidently review the commercial aspects, please indicate that here and only comment on the portion of the proposal that is relevant to your expertise.

4.9. Overall Assessment

Having provided comment against each of the above headings, please also provide a score for the proposal as detailed in ***Table 1*** below:

Table 1: Overall Assessment Score descriptions

Score	Overall Assessment
1	This proposal is scientifically or technically flawed
2	This proposal does not meet one or more of the assessment factors
3	This proposal meets all assessment factors but with clear weaknesses
4	This is a good proposal that meets all assessment factors but with minor weaknesses
5	This is a strong proposal that broadly meets all assessment factors
6	This is a very strong proposal that fully meets all assessment factors

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the scheme, there are no specific guidelines or examples for what a proposal needs to do to achieve each score and instead you should score a proposal based on which assessment description best matches your overall comments.

Additionally, this score will not directly affect whether a proposal is successful or unsuccessful; all proposals will be reviewed by the sift panel regardless of the reviews' scores.

5. Timescales

If you cannot comment within the suggested timescale, please confirm this immediately so we can discuss extending the deadline.

6. What Happens Next

The FLF Team will assess your review to confirm that it meets all of the necessary criteria. You may receive a request to amend your review if not and will have 5 working days to amend it. Failure to amend the review means that it may not be used to assess the application.

Applicants will receive anonymised copies of their received reviews and will have 10 working days to prepare a 3-page PI response to address any questions or concerns raised by reviewers. This response is not seen by reviewers, only by the moderation panel.

During the Moderating Sift Panel stage, the panel will form conclusions based on their interpretation of the specialist peer review reports, the applicants' responses to these reports and their own broad sectoral expertise. Your referee reports therefore play a vital role in supporting panels to reach their conclusions.

During the Interview Panel stage applicants are asked a series of both set and variable questions. As part of this process the panel members will consult your referee reports to identify any key questions that should be addressed by the applicant.

For a full breakdown of the entire assessment process, please refer to Annex D.

Any reviewer that has a provided a usable review received by UKRI from 23 November 2020 via Je-S, can get 'review credits' to their Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) account. This is an anonymous recognition of the reviewer's contribution to UKRI peer review each year. These contributions are uploaded to ORCID six times a year, but will not show in your ORCID account until at least 30 days after a funding decision has been made on the proposal reviewed.

To receive these, you must have both a Je-S and ORCID account and have linked your ORCID account to your Je-S account.

For more information, please visit the UKRI website.

7. Queries

If you have any queries about the review process or concerns regarding your written review, please contact the FLF team via either:

Email: fellowspeerreview@ukri.org
Further guidance on using Je-S can be found on the Je-S handbook, or by contacting them directly via either:

Email: je-shelp@je-s.ukri.org
Phone: 01793 44 4164

Annex A Assessment Criteria

Scheme objectives

- To develop, retain, attract and sustain research and innovation talent in the UK
- To foster new research and innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries, and facilitate movement of people between sectors
- To provide sustained funding and resources for the best early career researchers and innovators
- To provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle difficult and novel challenges, and support adventurous, ambitious programmes.

Factors assessed

Across all four factors assessed (below) a key issue will be whether the added value of the fellowship mechanism of support – e.g. the scale, flexibility and duration offered - is well demonstrated, as opposed to more standard project grant support. For business applications, consideration of the added value will include, for example, whether the novelty and levels of risk involved in the project mean that it is beyond the normal activity of the business.

Factor	What the assessment will look for:
Research & Innovation Excellence	• Excellence of the research and innovation • Importance, novelty and feasibility of the proposed programme of work (and whether long-term Fellowship support is needed to enable this) • Robust methodology and appropriate consideration of research and innovation reproducibility, openness, governance and ethical / social responsibility issues • Overall potential of the fellowship to establish or maintain a distinctive and outstanding research/innovation activity
Applicant & their Development[1]	• Be recognised to be of the highest standard relative to their career stage and on a trajectory to become world-class • Clear evidence of independence and thought leadership, which may go beyond the level normally expected of their current position • Demonstrate an ability to be, or become, a clear communicator and disseminator of knowledge and innovation, able to inspire and lead others; and ability to develop new relationships and influence across multiple disciplines and sectors

[1] For business hosted fellowships UKRI still supports the principle of open access for a project which has specifically identified a requirement to publish outcomes as a route to dissemination. This requirement should be included within a project's collaboration agreement. It should also follow the guidelines contained in the UKRI policy on open access.

Impact & Strategic Relevance	• Importance and potential impact of the research / innovation for society and / or the economy
	  o What are the potential short or long-term impacts, and how significant are they?
	  o Are the pathways to achieving this impact well understood, and are the plans for maximising impact (from the applicant and host organisation) proportionate, timely, and credible?
	• Where the Fellowship proposal aligns with a specific priority area identified by UKRI, the assessment will also address how strongly the proposal fits with the aims for the area; and what it will contribute alongside other proposals and activities in the same priority area

Research and Innovation Environment & Costs	• A demonstrable commitment from the host organisation to realising the potential of the fellow; and establishing them as a research/innovation leader • Consideration has been given to equality, diversity and inclusion aims of UKRI in support for the fellow and, if applicable, their wider team, and in using the Fellowship's provision for flexible working • Plans for supporting the fellow's programme of work; enabling the time commitment needed; ensuring access to space, • equipment/facilities, other resources and other relevant programmes; and enabling the applicant to maximise the social/economic impact of their work • Funding requested is appropriate and fully justified • The project plan and management arrangements are proportionate to the scale and complexity of the activity to be undertaken

Annex B Conflicts of Interest

UKRI defines a conflict of interest as a set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest. Even a perception of competing interests, impaired judgement or undue influence may be damaging to UKRI's reputation.

As a reviewer for the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme, a conflict of interest occurs if you:

Relationship with applicant(s):

- Have a close family relationship (e.g. spouse, partner, parent, sibling, child, in-law) or share a household with any individual named on the proposal.
- Have an existing close business or professional relationship with any individual named on the proposal.
- Have had a PhD/PhD Supervisor relationship with any individual named on the proposal within the last five years.
- Have collaborated on a research project and/or have co-published with any individual named on the proposal in the last three years.
- Are directly involved in the work that the applicant proposes to carry out and/or have assisted the applicant with their application for funding.

Organisational conflict:

- Are a current, visiting or honorary member of staff or a Professor Emeritus/Emerita at the same research organisation as any individual named on the proposal.
- Are at a past research organisation or have recently moved from the current organisation of any individual named on the proposal.
- Are at the same research organisation as another reviewer on the proposal.
- Are at a research organisation that is named as a project partner on the proposal or is the same organisation as that of a visiting researcher on the proposal.
- Have a vested interest, or stand to gain a financial or professional advantage from a particular outcome for an application which they are asked to review.

Current involvement with UK Research and Innovation:

- Have submitted a proposal to the same round of the scheme as the application which they have been asked to review.
- Have been approached and agreed to be a member of a committee connected with a research project, for example an advisory group or steering committee.
- Are a member of the panel for which the application is being moderated.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, if you are in doubt whether or not you should assess a proposal due to a conflict of interest please contact the Future Leaders Fellowships Team before completing the review at fellowspeerreview@ukri.org.

Annex C Animal use

Use of animals

The elaboration of a compelling research or innovation case is an essential prerequisite for justifying the use of animals. Over the past few years there have been a number of important initiatives that have been aimed at raising the sometimes-inadequate standard of reporting of animal experiments in scientific literature. The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research's (NC3Rs) ARRIVE guidelines, for example, lay out criteria that should be met in reporting animal studies in order that their results and conclusions can be appropriately evaluated by readers. These criteria address a range of issues relating to transparency and validity of experimental design, the avoidance or minimisation of bias and the adequacy of statistical aspects of the study including statistical power and appropriate statistical analysis.

In light of these initiatives UKRI has revised and updated its guidelines on what information needs to be provided to allow appropriate and thorough evaluation of the scientific strengths and weaknesses of proposals for funding involving animal use. In some cases, adherence to the principles defined in this section will require additional resources e.g. for animal identification such as 'microchipping', increased maintenance charges resulting from the randomisation procedure, or salary costs associated with obtaining statistical support. We recognise this and will support such costs where fully justified in the appropriate sections.

The NC3Rs has developed guidance for applicants when choosing contractors for animal research and the expectations of UK public funders, including a presentation detailing the information that applicants should provide.

All applications involving the use of non-human primates, cats, dogs, pigs and equines will be referred to the NC3Rs via their peer review service. In some circumstances, applications involving the use of other species may also be referred at the discretion of UKRI.

Home Office licences and ethical and welfare standards

Experiments using animals must comply with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), amended 2012 and any further embodiments. Institutions and grant holders are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate establishment, personal and project licences required under the Act have been granted by the Home Office, including gaining approval via their institution's local ethical review process. All awards are made on the absolute condition that no work that is controlled by the Act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained.

In addition, applicants must ensure that they are following best practice in relation to animal husbandry and welfare. Where proposed work is not covered under an existing ASPA project license, applicants should make certain that their proposals are received by their local Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), prior to submission and ensure that any ethical or welfare implications raised are addressed.

Replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experiments

Applicants are expected to have developed their applications in accordance with the cross funder guidance for the use of animals in research: Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Bioscience Research and NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate Accommodation, Care and Use.

Experiments using animals funded by UKRI must comply with ASPA in:

- Using the simplest possible, or least sentient, species of animal appropriate.
- Ensuring that distress and pain are avoided wherever possible.
- Employing an appropriate design and using the minimum number of animals consistent with ensuring that objectives of the proposal will be met.

Advice on opportunities and techniques for implementing these principles can be found on the NC3Rs website. This includes the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA), a free online tool from the NC3Rs to help optimise experimental design and ensure that the number of animals used is consistent with the objectives of the proposal.

Proposals involving animal use

Applicants are strongly advised to read the following section carefully before preparing a proposal to ensure all the relevant information required is included in the appropriate sections of their application. Applicants should ensure their proposal clearly sets out and justifies the following:

- Research objectives and how the knowledge generated will advance the field.
- The need to use animals and lack of realistic alternatives.
- Choice of species of animals to be used.
- Type of animal(s), for example, strain, pathogen free, genetically modified or mutant.
- Planned experimental design and its justification.
- Numbers of animals and frequency of measurements/interventions to be used.
- Primary outcomes to be assessed.
- Planned statistical analyses.

Applicants proposing to use animals must complete the following sections of the Je-S form:

Animal Costs

Detailing the costs associated with the purchase, breeding and maintenance of each species of animal.

Animal Research

Detailing any procedures categorised as moderate or severe (in accordance with the maximum prospective severity rating in the Home Office licence under which the work will be carried out) in order that the assessment of the proposal can balance the importance of the potential scientific advancement to the welfare of the animals.

Animal Species

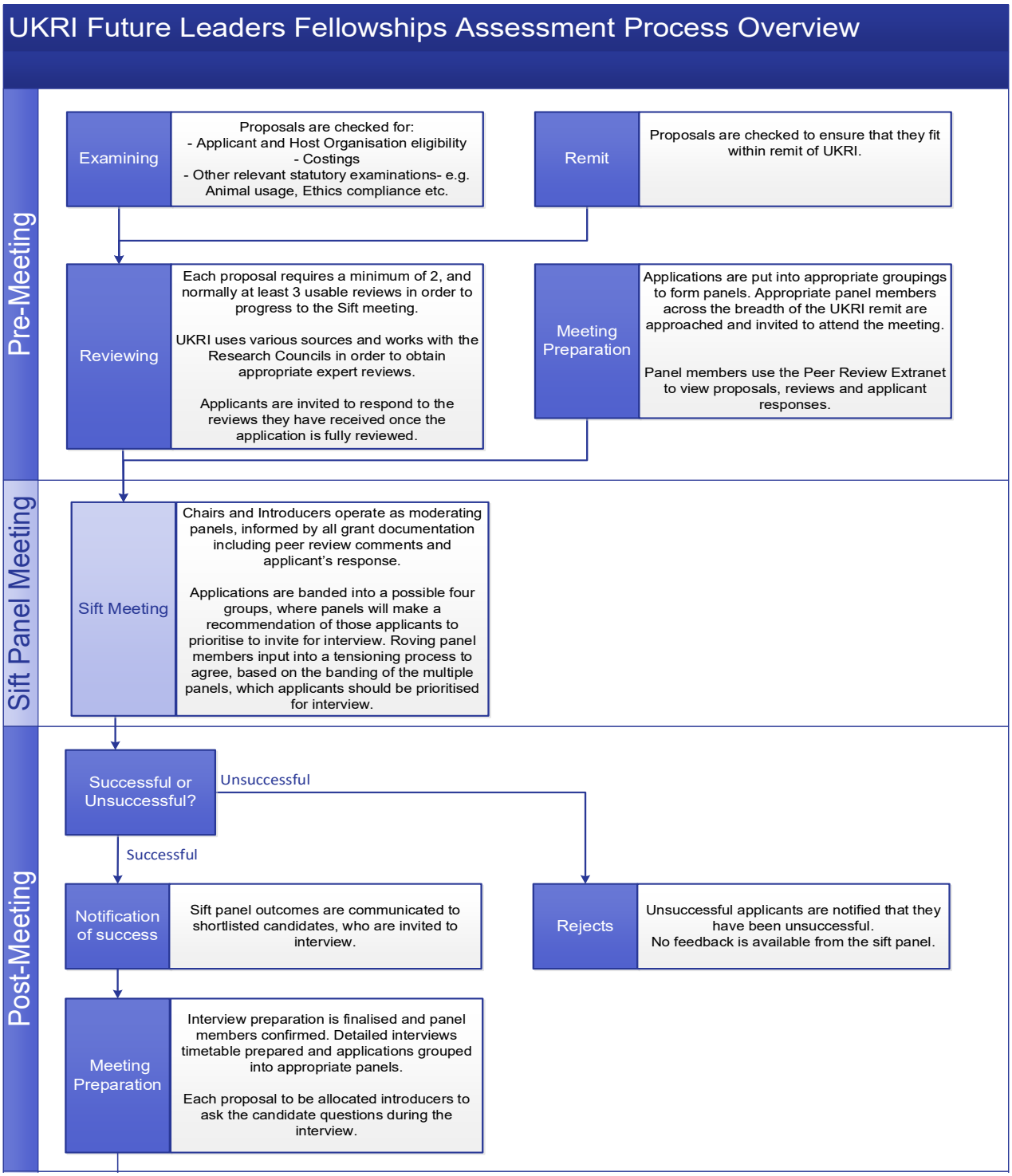
Detailing scientific reasons for the use of animals and an explanation as to why there are no realistic alternatives must be given, with an explanation of how the choice of species complies with ASPA.

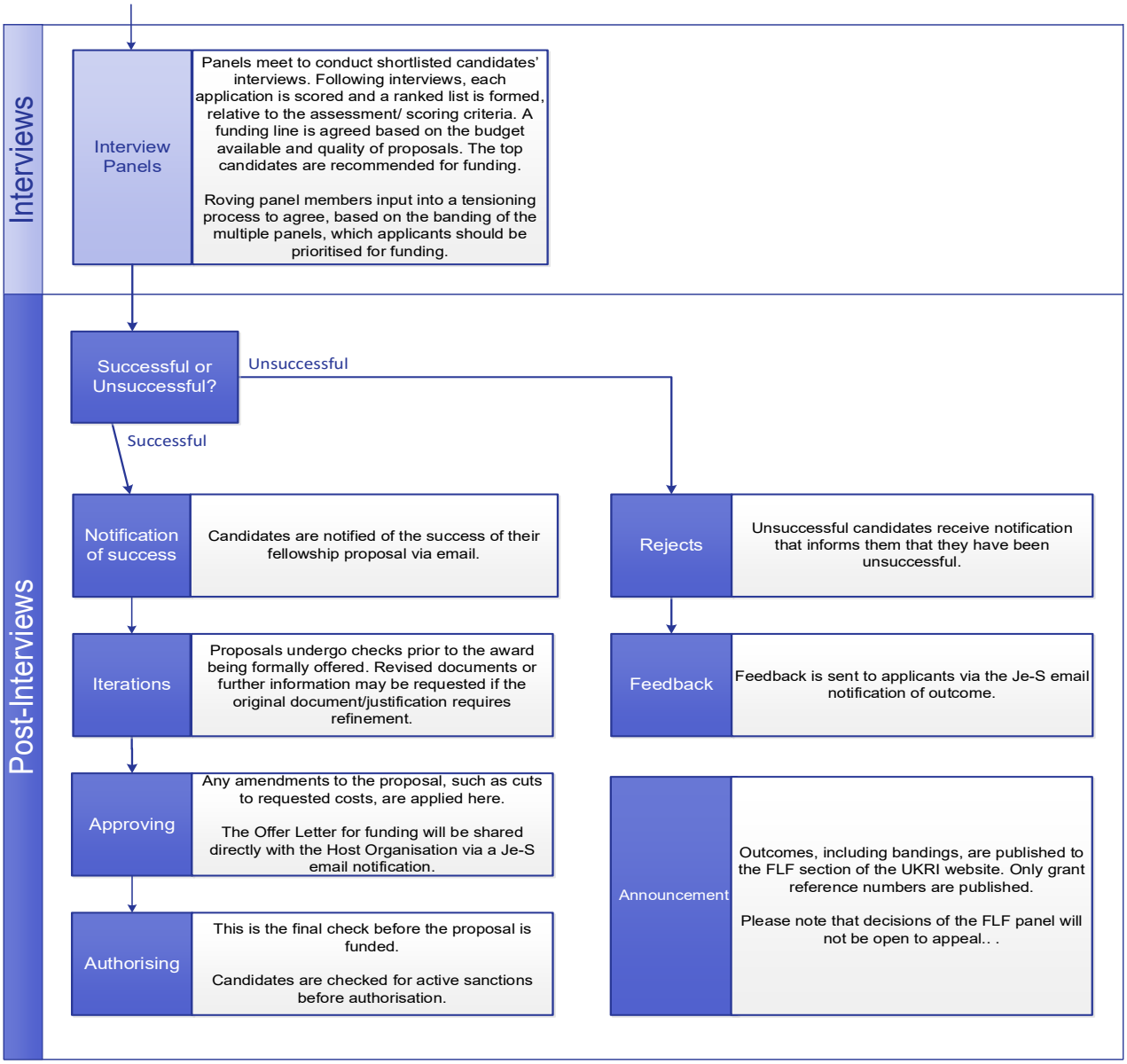
Use of animals overseas

If the proposal involves the use of animals overseas, applicants must submit a signed statement (uploaded as a Letter of Support to the Je-S application) from both UK and overseas partners confirming that:

- They will adhere to all relevant national and local regulatory systems in the UK and overseas.
- They will follow the guidelines laid out in the NC3Rs' Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research document and ensure work is carried out to UK standards.
- Before initiation of the proposed work, appropriate approvals from Organisational and/or central animal ethics committees will be obtained for experimental protocols to be adopted in their projects. Successful applicants may be expected to provide copies of these permissions before funding is released.
- Details on where the animal research will take place (UK or overseas) and through which funder the resources are being sought.

Annex D Overview of the Assessment Process




Interviews
Interview Panels
Panels meet to conduct shortlisted candidates' interviews. Following interviews, each application is scored and a ranked list is formed, relative to the assessment/ scoring criteria. A funding line is agreed based on the budget available and quality of proposals. The top candidates are recommended for funding.
Roving panel members input into a tensioning process to agree, based on the banding of the multiple panels, which applicants should be prioritised for funding.
Post-Interviews
Successful or Unsuccessful?
Unsuccessful
Successful
Notification of success
Candidates are notified of the success of their fellowship proposal via email.
Rejects
Unsuccessful candidates receive notification that informs them that they have been unsuccessful.
Iterations
Proposals undergo checks prior to the award being formally offered. Revised documents or further information may be requested if the original document/justification requires refinement.
Feedback
Feedback is sent to applicants via the Je-S email notification of outcome.
Approving
Any amendments to the proposal, such as cuts to requested costs, are applied here.
The Offer Letter for funding will be shared directly with the Host Organisation via a Je-S email notification.
Authorising
This is the final check before the proposal is funded.
Candidates are checked for active sanctions before authorisation.
Announcement
Outcomes, including bandings, are published to the FLF section of the UKRI website. Only grant reference numbers are published.
Please note that decisions of the FLF panel will not be open to appeal.. .

Annex E How to Write a Good Review

Good reviews are invaluable in helping the panel make funding decisions for the FLF scheme. They also provide constructive feedback to applicants in order to help them improve their research, and you should bear in mind how your review will be used. Your review will be fed back anonymously to the applicant, who will have an opportunity to respond to the questions you raise. Panel members will also use your comments and score to help them in their assessment.

Do:

- Read and address all the of the FLF scheme's Assessment Criteria.
- Reflect on the final written review and assign an appropriate overall assessment score based on the score descriptors.
- Be objective and professional – comments should be evidence-based.
- Provide clear and concise comments.
- Clearly identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide justification for your comments and grade, whether you are supportive of the proposal or not.
- Be aware that not everyone reading the comment will be a specialist in that field.
- Be aware of the impact of unconscious bias.
- Consider the added value of the FLF award to the candidate's career trajectory.
- Keep a back-up of your comments in case of a system timeout or error.

Don't:

- Make it personal.
- Use an emotive or confrontational tone or language.
- Reiterate the proposal or re-state the assessment questions.
- Include anything in the assessment that will identify you, such as references to your own work, where you have worked or who you have worked with.
- Be too brief, even if you deem the application very strong.
- Use Journal-based metrics to measure quality.
- Allow your review to be influenced by bias for your own field of research.
- Exceed the space restriction in Je-S (which is 4000 characters per section) or the rest of your review will be lost.

Annex F Applying for a Fellowship on Job-Share Basis

Applications from those wishing to hold a Future Leaders Fellowship on a job-share basis are encouraged as one of the mechanisms through which UKRI supports applications from those wishing to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities.

There may be times when an application for a fellowship as a job-share might be right for potential candidates.

Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Timeliness i.e. where a full-time equivalent fellow is required to ensure that time-critical research and innovation can be completed within a shorter timescale than a part- time fellowship would allow.

- An existing job-share i.e. where researchers and/or innovators are already working within a job-share that they wish to maintain.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate why they and the proposed programme of research and/or innovation would not be better served by two part-time fellowships.

A job-share fellowship should not be considered because a PI does not currently have the full skill set to undertake the fellowship. In these instances, a Co-Investigator who brings complementary and different skills to the project can be included as part of the fellowship award for a time limited period while the fellow develops their skills in the areas covered.

1) Is the expectation that the two individuals job sharing a fellowship have very similar skills and experiences, or is the expectation that their experience and skills should be complementary?

Most job-shares are between individuals with similar skills and experience. Job-shares should not be used to upskill an applicant who requires complementary and different skills in order to complete the project. Such upskilling should be achieved through the fellowship and is supported through the ability to include a time-limited Co-Investigator.

The applicants should make clear in their application the skills and experience of both applicants, and why they are applying via a job-share arrangement and not two separate part-time applications. It must also be stated in the application Cover Letter that the fellowship is being applied for as a job-share.

Please note that the Je-S form will list job-share fellowship applicants as Principal and Co-Investigator. This is entirely due to the limitations of our systems. The Co-PIs should have equal responsibility for the overall fellowship and programme of research and/or innovation. In addition, the joint applicants should be able to demonstrate a clear plan to support their own (and if applicable, their team) training and development needs. A plan should be in place for each of the joint applicants as part of the proposal.

This does not mean that the Co-PIs both have to have involvement in every aspect of the programme of research and/or innovation. For example, in terms of publications or other outcomes that result from the fellowship it may be that one Co-PI has more involvement in particular aspects than the other so we would not mandate that both Co-PIs have to have identical credit for these.

2) How do applicants apply as a job-share fellowship?

Applicants are recommend to contact the FLF team before applying on a job-share basis.

Only one application is required. Due to the limitations of Je-S it is not possible to have joint Principal Investigators (PIs) on the application so the joint applicants (Co-PIs) will be a notional PI (the 'Fellow') and a Co-I. Throughout the review and assessment process it will be made clear that the joint applicants should be treated as Co-PIs and as such the applicants will be considered on equal terms with neither candidate considered the 'lead' or 'primary' PI apart from for system administrative purposes.

3) What guidance do reviewers get when considering job-share proposals?

Noting that job-share fellowships are non-standard and that members of the research and innovation community may not have reviewed such proposals before, additional feedback is provided to those carrying out the external peer review of proposals and for those sitting on the Sift and Interview Assessment Panels.

This guidance:

1. Makes it clear that applicants are joint Principal Investigators

2. States that the:

    a. consideration of the Research & Innovation Excellence and the Impact & Strategic Relevance assessment criteria need to include assessment of how the proposed project forms a single coherent programme rather than separate activities

    b. consideration of the Applicant and their Development assessment criteria needs to consider both applicants jointly

    c. consideration of the Research and Innovation Environment & Costs assessment criteria needs to consider the commitment of the host organisation to the development and establishment of both applicants, and how the host will support the proposed programme of work as a whole

Additional guidance for those sitting on Interview Panels will also be available. This will make clear that both applicants will be attending the interview and that questions should be addressed to both applicants. Furthermore, it will be stated that that the applicant's joint Full Time Equivalent (FTE) spent on the Fellowship will be between the 0.5 and 1 required of a standard Fellowship.

Annex G Career Breaks and Flexible Working

The assessment of fellowship applications frequently involves appraisal of the applicant's track record. In making this appraisal, review panels take into account time spent outside the active research / innovation environment, whether through career breaks or flexible working.

Definitions

Career breaks are defined as a substantive period of time spent outside research/innovation. Reasons may include* the following:

- Personal reasons
- Trying out a new career
- Parental leave
- Ill health, injury or disability
- Caring/domestic responsibilities
- Study/training/further education

Flexible working describes any working arrangement where the number of hours worked, or the time that work is undertaken, vary from standard practice and could include* the following:

- Reduction in full time hours
- Long-term partial return to work
- Job sharing
- Compressed working hours
- Term-time only working
- Annualised hours

Guidance for review panels

In assessing the effects of career breaks or flexible working, panels will note the applicant's career trajectory and potential at the beginning of a break, relative to the stage of the applicant's career. In assessing applicants, panels will recognise that the effects on productivity of a career break, or a period of flexible working, may continue beyond the return to work.

The following areas may be affected*:

- Presentation and publication record
- Patents filed
- Track record of securing funding, including time to obtain preliminary data
- Maintaining networks of research / innovation contacts and collaborations
- Recruitment of staff
- Time required for training
- The ability to take up opportunities in different geographical locations
- The ability to take up courses, sabbaticals, 'visits', placements and secondments

Guidance for applicants

Applicants should make clear any substantive periods of absence from research/innovation within their application. Further details on the nature of the absence and how it has affected track record, productivity and career progression may be provided if desired[2]. Information provided will be used only to make appropriate adjustments when assessing an individual's track record, productivity and career progression.

[2] The information provided in response to this question helps UKRI in assessing how effective our policies and procedures are in promoting equal opportunities. This information may be used anonymously for statistical purposes and any publication would be on aggregate level. The information is treated in confidence and in line with the UKRI's data protection procedures.

*Lists are not exhaustive