



Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council

BBSRC DISCOVERY FELLOWSHIPS WEBINAR MARCH 2022

FAQ'S

| Question | Answer |
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| Eligibility & Remit | |
| With the removal of the PhD requirement is November 30th a hard deadline to be defended by? If your thesis is submitted for examination by November 30th is that sufficient? | Applicants must have successfully defended their PhD by 30th November 2022. |
| Must the applicant already be employed at their host institution at the time of the initial application? | Applicants do not need to be employed at the host at time of application. However, they must have agreed the support for the fellowship with the host in advance of applying |
| Is there a maximum number of years of postdoctoral experience permitted? | No. There is no limitation on the number of years research experience |
| Would a senior post-doc be less likely to be competitive? | BBSRC cannot advise on how competitive an individual is likely to be as this depends on the standard of applicants in any funding round. |
| Is there an age limit for this fellowship? | No, there is no limitation on the age of an applicant. |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Are these fellowships aimed at "fresh out the door" PhD or similar candidates OR should applicants have some form of post-doc or post-doc-esque experience.</p> <p>Is this open to researchers who do not have a PhD and do not have one ongoing</p> | <p>The Discovery Fellowship is to support researchers taking their first steps towards independence and gain leadership skills, so there is no limitation on, or expectation of the number of years' experience an applicant has.</p> <p>We have removed the requirement that applicants must have a PhD. Applicants should be demonstrating appropriate and relevant research or innovation experience, which could be through completion of a PhD or other higher qualification, relevant employment within a research or innovation environment, or a combination of both.</p> <p>Applicants must be able to evidence reasonable scientific and technical skills and competencies, in line with the ambitions of the Discovery Fellowships scheme.</p> |
| <p>What are citizenship requirements to apply? Are non-UK citizens eligible?</p> | <p>We welcome proposals from applicants of all nationalities, subject to the fellowship being hosted by an eligible institution based in the UK. All successful applicants who require a visa to work in the UK are eligible to be considered under the Global Talent visa route.</p> |
| <p>Does the eligibility criteria mean you cannot accept any potential academic job until the decision is made on your Discovery Fellowship application?</p> | <p>Securing a role between now and any outcome from a fellowship application will mean that the Fellowship must be withdrawn. However, securing such a role may mean you can apply to other calls (for example BBSRC standard grants – aka Responsive Mode)</p> |
| <p>What is the difference between Discovery and BBSRC standard grants specifically related to priority area like data-driven biology, etc.?</p> | <p>The aim of the Discovery Fellowship is to support researchers taking their first steps towards independence and gain leadership skills. Therefore, applicants for a Discovery Fellowship should not have held a post that had the potential to have already established independent research.</p> <p>To apply for a standard grant, you must be employed by an eligible RO at lecturer-level or equivalent (or above).</p> <p>For a Discovery fellowship you must not have held such a post at any time, in the UK or overseas.</p> <p>The priority areas are BBSRC-wide, so are the same for Discovery Fellowships and standard Grants.</p> |
| <p>Does holding a teaching assistantship/ junior lectureship in training (e.g. during a PhD) qualify as having held a lecturer position?</p> | <p>No, applicants holding such post prior to their PhD would be eligible to apply.</p> |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>How is independence judged? Would it be expected for a fellow to move to a new institution, or if it could be evidenced, they were developing as a leader in their current institution would that be OK?</p> <p>Would it be possible to demonstrate sufficient independence (such as through current and proposed external collaborations) while remaining based at the applicant's current host organisation or host lab?</p> | <p>There is no expectation for applicant to be moving from to a new institution or department. Independence can be demonstrated in a range of ways including building collaborations and networks independently from the current group/supervisor. Applicants should also ensure that they demonstrate that they have developed the proposed Fellowship research themselves, they have sole ownership of the project and that the proposed research is independent from projects being conducted or planned by the host PI.</p> |
| <p>are EMBO long-term or Marie-Curie postdoctoral fellowships considered as lecturer level fellowships?</p> | <p>We recommend that you contact the Fellowships team direct for further guidance.</p> |
| <p>I am a senior research associate in the UK but I hold an adjunct unpaid and research assistant professor title at a university in the US. would this prevent me to be eligible for BBSRC?</p> | <p>Further details would be needed – we recommend contacting the Fellowship team direct for further guidance.</p> |
| <p>What are the criteria of continuing a project you set up as a post-doc onwards to the discovery fellowship</p> | <p>The Discovery Fellowship can build on aspects of your PhD / postdoc research, but you will need to demonstrate that you have developed the proposed Discovery Fellowship research yourself, that you have sole ownership of the project and that the proposed research is independent from any projects being conducted or planned by your previous Group Leaders. You need to be able to demonstrate that the research proposed will help you establish your own “research niche”</p> |
| <p>Are there any areas in biological sciences that you are interested in seeing Fellowship applications on?</p> | <p>Your project must be within the remit of BBSRC. We encourage projects that fit BBSRC's strategic priorities which can be found on 'Our research portfolio and priorities' webpage</p> |
| <p>Hi, Can an applicant submit a fellowship to BBSRC (Discovery) and NERC (IRF) in the same year if the project is different? I had read that you can only apply to one UKRI fellowship in a calendar year? Perhaps this was a NERC IRF rule?</p> | <p>BBSRC allows applicants to apply to other organisations (with the same or a different project) whilst applying for BBSRC fellowship funding. However, you must check with other research councils/organisations for their rules on applications to other organisations, as these can vary. BBSRC is not responsible for other research councils' rules on this.</p> <p>Applications will not be accepted by any UKRI research council for a project that is essentially the same, or identical to one to be submitted, or under consideration for funding by another UKRI research council.</p> |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Can I submit applications to more than one research council if my project has the same high-level theme and research goals if it straddles the remit of two bodies (e.g., basic science that also has public health focus may be suitable for MRC and BBSRC).</p> | <p>Some research areas fall within the remit of an individual council and receive funding from that council alone, other areas cross the remit of more than one of the research councils. Any fellowship proposal that significantly extends across two or more council domains will be assessed using the Cross-Council Remit Agreement.</p> <p>Applications will not be accepted by any UKRI research council for a project that is essentially the same, or identical to one to be submitted, or under consideration for funding by another UKRI research council.</p> |
| <p>What are BBSRC's expectations around applicants' addressing responsible innovation matters in their proposals?</p> | <p>It is advised that any research that may have potential for public concern is addressed in the application. Reviewers and the Committee will comment on any ethical or societal issues raised by the proposed work.</p> <p>See Responsible Innovation on the UKRI website.</p> |
| <p>Are the projects with application potential, or those could end up to a start-up are welcome?</p> | <p>Projects need to be within BBSRC remit, which includes innovation. BBSRC does not directly fund companies and as such intellectual assets must be owned by the Research Organisation with no pre-existing exclusivity to a company.</p> |
| <p>Could you please clarify about the remit criteria; did I understand this that applicants need to do a mandatory check that their projects are within the BBSRC remit prior to applying?</p> | <p>It is not mandatory to check your remit. If the overall approach and fit of your proposal is clearly in BBSRC remit (see Areas we fund), there should be no need to check.</p> <p>It is however recommended that you check if your research is within BBSRC's remit if it's interdisciplinary or not clearly within BBSRC's research areas. For example, BBSRC funds research in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humans – including human physiology, cell biology, genetics and genomics if it's relevant to understanding normal human function (but not if it's focused on specific human diseases or abnormal conditions) • animal diseases – but not studies primarily involving animal models of human disease and human toxicology, including abnormal toxicological reactions and drug toxicity • wild species – when they are pests in an agricultural setting or pollinators of agricultural crops, or when they act as a suitable model and provide wider understanding of biological processes • managed land – where this relates to agriculture. |

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| <p>I work on biopolymer chemistry and have an experience on working with water treatment and fortification. what should be my remit?</p> <p>If your project is using cancer cells as a model system, would this be in the remit of BBSRC in principle?</p> | <p>For specific remit queries, please send a brief outline (no more than 2-pages) of your work aims and objectives to remit@bbsrc.ac.uk</p> |
| Host PI and Institution | |
| <p>Do host institutions have to be UK-based or can they be international?</p> | <p>The Fellowship must be held in the UK at an eligible UK organisation.</p> |
| <p>Do we need a Principal investigator from the host institution?</p> | <p>Yes. You need a Host PI based at the research organisation where you will undertake your fellowship. The role of the host PI is to provide guidance and mentorship through the fellowship.</p> |
| <p>Are there any further conditions on host PI other than having permanent status within the university?</p> | <p>The host PI must hold a position that is of at least lecturer-level or equivalent.</p> |
| <p>Could you have 2 host PIs?</p> | <p>No, you can have only one Host PI.</p> |
| <p>Can there be a joint host institution?</p> | <p>The fellowship must be held in one place, based at a specific research group or department at the host institution. Other groups can be included as collaborators or partners, which must be fully justified in the application.</p> |
| <p>Is there a penalty to stay in the same host organisation?</p> <p>Hi, can I have some of my Phd advisors as the mentors for this fellowship?</p> <p>Is there an expectation that fellows should move institution or is it OK to (e.g.) be hosted at the same institution you are a postdoc?</p> <p>I am wishing to apply with my current institute as my new host institute. What is the best way to make it clear that this is the best place to carry out my fellowship?</p> | <p>There is no expectation for applicant to be moving from to a new institution or department. Applicants should ensure that they make a very clear case as to why the host PI/organisation is the very best place to undertake their research, and for their career development (for example, providing exceptional support in terms of resources to support the project, but also the training and mentorship for the fellow as a researcher).</p> |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Can I submit a proposal which the study sites are overseas?</p> <p>Is there a minimum/maximum time that can be spent overseas?</p> | <p>Periods of research can be conducted at overseas Research Organisations, but the host organisation that employs the fellow and holds the Discovery Fellowship award must be based in the UK. Any period of research away from the primary host must be fully justified and supported by letters from the proposed host Group Leaders at any secondary organisations.</p> |
| <p>Could you please expand on the requirement to show the negotiation with the host department regarding the support they will offer.</p> <p>Can you give some examples about what a strong commitment from the host organization looks like?</p> | <p>The Committee is looking for evidence that the fellow has fully considered why they have chosen the host organisation to carry out their research and have ensured that they are getting the best possible support for their research and career development. Evidence could be through demonstrating that other organisations have been considered, and what drove final decision to choose a particular host. For example, did one host offer more resources, but another had access to better training and mentorship programmes.</p> <p>The Committee will be looking for institutional support that demonstrates commitment to the fellow in terms of ensuring the success of the research planned, and career development of the fellow towards independent research. This could be through additional financial support exceeding the required 20%fEC – for example, access staff resources, facilities etc, or through provision of career and professional development support (for example having named mentors in place for specific reasons or expertise)</p> |
| <p>Could there be more than one (multiple?) UK research partners involved on the project should the project require that? Is there a limit on how many institutes are involved?</p> | <p>There is no limitation on the number of collaborators. Other groups can be included as collaborators or partners, which must be fully justified in the application.</p> |
| <p>Narrative CV</p> | |
| <p>How can we find more examples or guidance for the narrative CVs? Great initiative btw!</p> | <p>As this is the first time we are using this style of narrative CV format we don't have a library of example available. The template contains multiple examples for each section of the types of information applicants might want to use.</p> |
| <p>Can you include bioRxiv submissions in the Narrative CV?</p> | <p>Yes, the citation of preprints is acceptable.</p> |

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| <p>How important are numbers of publications? Publication output differs so much between fields, how is that accounted for?</p> <p>How much previous publications and academic record of the applicant are important?</p> | <p>The narrative CV format puts the emphasis on the significance of the work to the field and the contributions of the applicant to the work. This includes a range of outputs and not just publications.</p> |
| <p>How is the track record assessed, particularly when it comes to the number of papers published, the rate of publishing, and the impact of past publications?</p> | <p>The template puts the focus on the significance of the outputs, the contributions of the applicant and the impact on the broader scientific community.</p> |
| <p>Can you give a sense of the extent of preliminary data required to support a grant application?</p> | <p>Whilst preliminary data is beneficial, there isn't a need for extensive preliminary data. This fellowship is about taking that next step towards independence and on a journey of independence to lead a group, or lab.</p> |
| <p>For the Outputs section in the CV template, are we expected to list only research output relevant to the proposed project, or would we list all research output?</p> | <p>Section one gives the opportunity to detail the contributions to and significance of up to ten of applicants' research outputs. Not all the outputs need to be directly related to the project but since there is a limit to the number of output priority might want to be given to more relevant outputs.</p> |
| <p>Je-S and the Application Process</p> | |
| <p>Will there be a detailed breakdown of what is required in the Je-S section of the application?</p> | <p>The Discovery Fellowships Je-S Guidance (which can be found in the 'Additional Info' section on the funding opportunity page) provides clear details on each section of the Je-S form and what is required.</p> |
| <p>Is the track record now not part of the 8-page case for support, and is part of the narrative CV? Therefore, the 8 pages are purely for the project proposal?</p> | <p>Correct. With the new Narrative CV format, the inclusion of a track record in the case for support is no longer a requirement</p> |
| <p>Should the work plan contain only the diagram or also text description?</p> | <p>The workplan must be diagrammatic.</p> |
| <p>Is there a template for the Data Management plan or some sort of guidance for this document?</p> | <p>There is no template for the Data Management Plan. Details on what to include can be found in the Discovery Fellowships Je-S Guidance, and on the UKRI BBSRC 'What to include in your application' web page</p> |

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| Do we attach technical assessment forms for host institute facilities? | TAF's are only required for the following facilities Earlham Institute supercomputing ARCHER2 facility at University of Edinburgh UK 850MHz Solid State NMR Facility at the University of Warwick See Discovery Fellowships Je-S Guidance |
| If we have an overseas collaborative partner on the proposed project, can we include them and do we have to submit any MoU at the time of submission? Do you require any support evidence from our project collaborators (e.g. Industry partners, oversea universities or research institutions)? | Letters of Support must be provided by collaborators and submitted with the application. |
| If there are several groups at the host institution that the fellow can collaborate with, should they send separate letters of support, or should this be encompassed in the host group PI statement or HoD statement? | The applicant can submit as many letters of support as they wish. Multiple collaborators at the same organisation can sign one letter or submit separate letters. |
| Are re-submissions allowed from a previously unsuccessful Discovery Fellowship application? It would take on board peer review comments, but the topic and research project would be the same as previous | Applicants that have previously submitted a Discovery or David Phillips Fellowship proposal can apply to subsequent fellowship rounds with the same, modified or a different proposal providing they still meet the eligibility criteria. Where an applicant is resubmitting the same project, they should ensure that any feedback previously given by the Committee has been addressed. |
| What are the expected start dates for this round of fellowships? Can the start date be changed when the fellowship is awarded? | Fellowships must start by no later than 1st July 2023. Awarded Fellows would be expected to start their fellowship as close as possible to the date indicated at submission, so anticipated start dates should be realistic taking in to consideration the assessment timeline as indicated on the Funding Opportunity webpage |
| Resources | |
| How much funding should be allocated to personal salary? Is there a minimum / maximum? | Salary negotiations should be between the applicant and host organisation. BBSRC does not advise on these aspects, however the application must be within the fEC limit of the scheme (£500K) |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Is hiring technician allowed as part of the cost?</p> <p>How much technical support can be included in the budget?</p> <p>What we can buy using the fellowship in terms of research materials?</p> | <p>Funding technical support is permitted.</p> <p>You should request the eligible resources that you need provided they are appropriate for undertaking the research and are fully justified. Any such costs must still be within the FEC of the scheme (£500K)</p> |
| <p>Is it correct that the fellowship does not allow publication fees?</p> | <p>That is correct. Publication costs associated with peer reviewed journal articles and conference papers should not be requested in the costs for your fellowship as these are funded by UKRI APC publication funding (see Publishing your research findings on the UKRI website)</p> |
| <p>If we want to have staff (e.g. postdoc, PhD), but we cannot add staff costs in the fellowship, can we apply for other BBSRC funding to support this staff?</p> | <p>No, we expect host organisations to provide additional commitments to our fellows. We would be looking for evidence that the host organisation will contribute significant financial support, in-kind support, or both, if an award is made.</p> <p>Examples of additional support could be through the provision of items of equipment, access to additional staff members or students, or a direct financial contribution.</p> <p>Discovery Fellows are not able to apply for additional funding during the fellowship.</p> |
| <p>Can a phd student be funded?</p> <p>Can you fund undergrads or masters students that you are mentoring/working with for something related to the grant?</p> | <p>Studentships, or student resource cannot be requested, or included on Discovery Fellowship applications. However, such support could form part of the Host contribution to your Fellowship.</p> |
| <p>If equipment costs exceed 20% of the budget, will the BBSRC contribution be reduced to less than 80% FEC or will the BBSRC in this case contribute something towards equipment?</p> | <p>Equipment costs are not permitted on a Discovery Fellowship</p> |
| <p>Is there any guidance on what counts as equipment and what might be a research consumable? E.g. would a camera be equipment but an SD card be a consumable?</p> | <p>'Equipment' would usually be defined as an item that would have use beyond the immediate scope of the fellowship project.</p> <p>If the card and camera were purchased at the same time as a one-off purchase, then it would be equipment (a package). If there was a need for a recurring cost for cards purchased throughout the duration of the project, then that should be costed as a consumable.</p> |

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| Can you employ your Research staff at other institutions abroad that are sponsors for your fellowship? | No. Research staff are not permitted on a Discovery Fellowship. In addition, costs for collaborators cannot be met by BBSRC. If you have overseas collaborators, they would be expected to meet the costs of resources (including staff) relating to the collaboration. |
| Would the BBSRC fund relocation allowance if wanted to spend say 3-6months abroad? | Relocation expenses of up to £2000 can be claimed and must be costed into the proposal if applicable. This must be included within the maximum permitted fellowship costs (£500K fEC) |
| Reviewers and Assessment | |
| Can we nominate reviewers from our past post-doctoral institutes? Also, whether the reviewers should be from UK institutes? | Reviewers should not be conflicted with the applicants, and it could be that anyone who has worked closely with the applicant may be deemed as conflicted. There is no geographical limitation on reviewers |
| I might have mis-understood, but by the PI response does this go to the applicant? | <p>Reviews received are sent to the applicants and provide an opportunity for the applicant to respond to, rebut, or address any specific points raised by reviewers. This is called the 'PI Response' It can be used to clarify reviewer misunderstandings or provide additional supporting information for the proposal. In reaching its final decision, the Committee review the proposal documentation, reviewer comments and the applicant response, and assess these against the criteria described in the BBSRC Research Fellowships Handbook.</p> <p>Further details on the PI Response can be found in the PI response to reviewers guidance document</p> |
| Following peer review, are applicants able to alter the research proposal if beneficial? | No. Changes to the application are not permitted once it has been submitted. Any additional information - for example providing additional preliminary data, could be included in the PI response, but must be within the page-limitations of the PI response document. |
| Do you send interview questions ahead of time? | Specific interview questions are not made available ahead of time. |

| Question | Answer |
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| Post-Award | |
| Is it necessary for the fellowship recipients to stay within the UK for research AFTER the end of their fellowship period? | No, there are no limitations or expectations placed on the fellow at the end of the fellowship term. |
| Is it possible to apply to work part-time and therefore extend the duration of the fellowship? | <p>The fellowship can be undertaken part-time. With such awards, the time devoted to the research must be equivalent to at least 50% of a normal full-time working week. The award is then extended pro-rata. Therefore, a fellow working 50% FTE would extend the duration from 3 years to 6 years.</p> <p>Please note that when filling out the Je-S form the duration for all applications should be entered as 36 months - arrangements for part-time working will be dealt with post-award should the application be successful.</p> |
| Can you change your position from full time to half-time after for example, a year after you started? | Yes. This would be through a Grant Maintenance Request via Je-s which would be administered via your research organisation and the UKRI grants service team. |
| Given that part-time fellowships are possible, is it allowed to have a separate part-time contract elsewhere, or within the same organisation? | It would be permitted for a Discovery Fellowship holder to have a separate part-time contract for work outside of the fellowship commitment. Total hours for separate contracts must not exceed permitted full-time working hours (equivalent to 37.5 per week) |
| Could you clarify - did you say that successful fellows were required to spend 100% of their time on the fellowship and not apply for other grants during this time? | Yes, the fellow would be expected to commit their full contracted working time to the fellowship. For example, if a fellow holds a 50% FTE contact with their host, they would be committed to working that time on the fellowship. |
| You mentioned that fellows should commit to the fellowship project full time - is commitment to teaching allowed during the fellowship? | Teaching is not usually permitted during the time that the fellow should be committing to the fellowship work unless it was through a separate contract. Total hours must not exceed permitted full-time working hours (equivalent to 37.5 per week) |
| <p>A discovery fellow cannot apply for any other funding during the fellowship. How is the fellow supposed to continue after the fellowship without further funding?</p> <p>Can you apply for future funding before your fellowship ends?</p> | The fellow can't apply for funding for research that will be undertaken whilst they are working on the fellowship. They can however apply for funding that will commence once the fellowship has finished. |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>You mentioned that we can't apply for other grants on the discovery fellowship. Is this also true for small grants to further support the proposed project?</p> <p>Can you apply for equipment funding, which this fellowship does not provide?</p> | <p>Fellowship holders can apply for small grants for travel, or for equipment. However, fellows can't apply for grants that support research, or for equipment grants that have associated research funding (for example, BBSRC ALERT)</p> |
| <p>Whilst you can't apply for other funding for yourself if you do secure the fellowship, could you apply for PhD studentships?</p> | <p>Funding for PhD studentships would be expected to be provided by the Host organisation as part of its support for the fellowship.</p> |
| <p>If someone was to go on maternity leave during the application process would that be considered for moving a start date forward?</p> | <p>This would be handled on a case-by-case basis through negotiation between the fellow, the host and BBSRC.</p> |
| <p>Can I find a job during the DF? i.e. quit the fellowship after e.g. 1 year.</p> | <p>You can terminate the fellowship at any time.</p> |
| <p>Is there any place we could have check on some of the previously successful applications?</p> | <p>The profiles for previous BBSRC Discovery Fellows are currently in the process of being moved to the new UKRI website. Details for fellows awarded up to 2019 can currently be accessed via the National Archives webpage.</p> <p>You can also find details of Fellows awarded via UKRI Gateway to Research – filter by: Funder - BBSRC Project Category – Fellowships</p> |
| <p>how long does the funding go on for?</p> | <p>Discovery Fellowships are a minimum of three years duration (pro-rata for part-time working i.e. if you work 50% FTE the fellowship would be 6 years)</p> |
| <p>General</p> | |
| <p>Are the David Phillip fellowships now part of the Discovery Fellowships, or will they reappear as a separate funding opportunity?</p> | <p>The David Phillips Fellowship scheme remains on hold for the foreseeable future.</p> |
| <p>How many applications do you usually get?</p> | <p>The number of applications submitted varies from year to year.</p> |

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>What is the success rate of the applications?</p> <p>What is the success rate last round? And is there gender balance for awarding fellowships?</p> | <p>Success rates can depend on several factor (e.g., the number and quality of application submitted).</p> <p>In 2021 149 proposals were submitted at closing date 137 applications went through full peer-review (a number were withdrawn or rejected due to remit, eligibility, or other issues) Following the sift, 42 applicants were shortlisted for interview 15 awards were made</p> <p>BBSRC encourages applications from all individuals from all backgrounds, who meet the eligibility criteria regardless of gender or any protected characteristic. Applications are assessed against the assessment criteria (which can be found in the Handbook), with the best candidates being awarded regardless of gender.</p> |