



**UK Research
and Innovation**

Future Leaders Fellowships: Reviewers' Guidance

Version 11 – August 2023

Ver.	Details
11	2.1 – Added section for new reviewers to sign post the online training course 2.2 - Updated to reflect UKRI's new Conflict of Interest Policy 4.1.1 – Updated to include clarification on definition of an Early Career Researcher Annex A – Updated to reflect UKRI's new Conflict of Interest Policy

Contents

1	The Future Leaders Fellowships Scheme.....	3
1.1	Overview	3
1.2	How the scheme differs from existing fellowship schemes.....	3
2	Before you review.....	4
2.1	New Reviewers.....	4
2.2	Conflict of Interest.....	4
2.3	Timescales	4
3	Principles of Assessment and Decision Making	4
4	Considerations when completing a review	6
4.1	Proposal considerations.....	6
4.1.1	Fellow eligibility.....	6
4.1.2	Good Research Practice	6
4.1.3	Impact.....	7
4.1.4	Hyperlinks.....	7
4.1.5	Covid-19.....	8
4.2	Reviewer considerations.....	9
4.2.1	Language.....	9
4.2.2	Bias	9
4.2.3	Multidisciplinary Proposals	9
4.2.4	Journal Impact Factors.....	9
4.2.5	Information Rights Legislation.....	10
5	Completing the Review Form.....	10
5.1	Declaration of Interest.....	10
5.2	Applicant, Training and Development.....	10
5.3	Leadership.....	11
5.4	Programme.....	12
5.5	Host Organisation	12
5.6	Resources Requested.....	13
5.7	Ethics and Data Management.....	14
5.8	Relevance to the Aims of the FLF.....	14
5.9	Reviewer Expertise	15
5.10	Overall Assessment.....	15
6	What Happens Next.....	15
7	Reviewer Recognition.....	16
8	Queries	16
Annex A	Conflicts of Interest	17
Annex B	Animal use.....	19
Annex C	Applying for a Fellowship on Job-Share Basis.....	22
Annex D	Career Breaks and Flexible Working.....	24
Annex E	Assessment criteria.....	26

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, businesses, and other research and innovation 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 FLF 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 FLF scheme provides long-term support in order 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 or innovation.

In order to support excellent research and innovation wherever it arises and to facilitate movement of people and projects between sectors, FLF fellows can be based in universities, businesses or other eligible independent research organisations.

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

2 Before you review

2.1 New Reviewers

Those new to review writing either generally or for UKRI should consider completing our short [online training course](#). The training course is made up of two modules, the first covering the FLF scheme and the second providing guidance on good review writing. The course should take around 30 minutes to complete. Guidance on how to register for the training is on the [UKRI website](#).

2.2 Conflict of Interest

Before you complete a review, please ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest with the proposal. The number one reason for a received review being considered unusable is because of a conflict of interest, so we request that you make yourself familiar with the policy available at [Annex A](#) and inform us [before writing the review](#) if you have or suspect any conflicts of interest with the proposal you have been asked to review by email to fellowspeerreview@ukri.org.

UKRI is a publicly funded organisation and is accountable to government and the public for its actions and for the way it conducts its business, which must be undertaken in a way that is transparent and guards against potential conflicts of interest influencing the outcome of decisions.

2.3 Timescales

You will have 15 working days to provide your review. If you cannot comment within this timescale, please confirm by reply or by emailing fellowspeerreview@ukri.org immediately, so we can discuss extending the deadline or, if you are still not able to provide a review with an extension, so that we can invite another reviewer in your place as quickly as possible.

If you are able to suggest possible alternative reviewers we could approach when you decline, this would be much appreciated.

3 Principles of Assessment and Decision Making

Expert review is governed by several underlying principles, including those of integrity, confidentiality and anonymity. A summary of points relevant to reviewers are below. Full information on UKRI's Principles of Assessment and Decision-Making can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

Expert Assessment

- Tailored guidance provided to reviewers before they undertake review of applications
- Reviewers are expected to have peer recognition or established expertise in the field to review the application.
- Continuous review of the assessment processes to ensure that our assessors have the appropriate range of expertise and knowledge to carry out assessments, which is especially important for the assessment of cross-disciplinary applications.

Transparency

- Funding guides, assessment criteria and details of the assessment process are published online
- Review comments are made available to applicants in advance of the panel meeting, so that the applicants can respond to comments by reviewers.

- After the funding decisions are made, we inform applicants on the outcomes of the funding decision.

Impartiality

- Reviewers with an actual or perceived conflict of interest are instructed to decline our request to review applications.
- UKRI takes steps to mitigate against implicit biases that can be present in individuals, which can impact fairness and objectivity in funding decisions.

Appropriateness

- We aim to ensure that our assessment processes are appropriate to the proposed research and innovation with respect to its scale and complexity.
- We are committed to continually evolving funding assessment and design our assessment processes to reduce biases, which includes our commitment to responsible use of metrics in research evaluation

Confidentiality

- Applications to UKRI, including related data, intellectual property and application documents, must be treated in confidence by any individuals or organisations involved in the assessment process. 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.
- Reviewers are instructed to not inadvertently identify themselves in the text of the assessment.

Integrity and Ethics

- Responsible research conduct is intrinsic to society's trust in research and innovation. We aim to promote and safeguard the public value of research and innovation and ensure that funding decisions are based on evidence and rigorous analysis.
- UKRI refers to the core values of honesty, rigour, care and respect, openness and transparency, and accountability
- We expect assessors to take ethics and integrity into account when undertaking their assessments. This means exhibiting impeccable integrity and following the principles of good research practice detailed in the [UKRI Research Integrity Guidance](#) considering the principals of [Responsible Innovation](#).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Our evolving processes are designed to reduce biases against gender, ethnicity or other protected characteristics, demonstrating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will take steps to improve the assessment process by utilising the talent and resources offered by assessors from underrepresented groups such as women, early career researchers, and members of all ethnicities.

Separation of Duties

- Decisions on individual funding applications are taken following an independent assessment of their quality and likely impact and adhere to the Haldane Principle.
- Those who are assessing applications will not also be responsible for authorising the funding decision, which is made by our senior staff with the relevant delegated authority.

4 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 proposal in a constructive manner and raise any concerns in the form of questions for the applicant.

Reviews are welcome from experts with all levels of experience of review writing, providing they are confident in their ability to assess the proposal. Advice on writing a good review can be found in the [Reviewers' Quick guide](#).

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 B](#).

4.1 Proposal considerations

4.1.1 Fellow eligibility

The FLF scheme welcomes proposals from fellows with a diverse variety of backgrounds including those on a job share, working part-time, who have taken career breaks or are working flexibly, and all should be assessed equally.

More information on reviewing Job Share proposals can be found in [Annex C](#) and more information on career breaks and flexible working can be found in [Annex D](#).

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the FLF scheme, applications are received from a diverse range of applicants from across UKRI's remit and therefore a definitive definition of 'early career researcher' is not applicable. The FLF Team cannot provide any clarification on what career stage an applicant is at, instead it is up to the applicant to make the case that they are appropriately positioned for the scheme as part of their application and for reviewers and panel members to decide the strength of this case.

4.1.2 Good Research Practice

UKRI is committed to maintaining a research and innovation system where diverse and dynamic people and ideas can thrive, therefore applicants are expected to demonstrate an ability to identify and implement good practice in matters relating to the modern research environment such as:

4.1.2.1 Research Integrity and Responsible Innovation

The high integrity of research supported by UKRI is part of what makes it trustworthy and trusted. High integrity is the product of responsible research practices and a culture and environment that promotes and supports it.

High integrity in research is the result of upholding the values of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect for those involved in research. It supports accountability for a positive research environment.

A process that takes the wider impacts of research and innovation into account. It aims to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, that barriers to dissemination, adoption and diffusion of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic benefits of research and innovation are fully realised.

For researchers, responsible innovation is a process that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest. Research has the ability to not only produce understanding, knowledge and value, but also unintended consequences, questions, ethical dilemmas and/or social transformations.

For businesses, responsible innovation is the careful consideration of, and action to address, the potential impacts of introducing to the market, a new product, service, process and/or business model.

More details on [Research Integrity](#) and [Responsible Innovation](#) can be found on the UKRI website.

4.1.2.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is a critical aspect of a healthy research culture – from how it's designed, how it's carried out and who is involved.

Research and innovation should be 'by everyone, for everyone' – a dynamic, diverse and inclusive research and innovation system in the UK is an integral part of society and should give everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit

Applicants are expected to demonstrate an understanding that a diversity of ideas, opinions, knowledge and people enriches our work and enlarges our knowledge economy

More information on our principles for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

4.1.3 Impact

During your review, you are asked to assess whether applicants have demonstrated a robust thought process around the potential economic and societal impacts of their research and proposed a way to move towards, accelerate or implement these impacts.

Applicants are encouraged to:

- Identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages
- Articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or impact upon understandings of these needs
- Outline the planning and management of associated activities, including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and feasibility
- Include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant users.

4.1.4 Hyperlinks

Reviewers are not expected to consider anything outside of the documents provided by the

applicant. This includes any hyperlinks provided by the applicant on documents and we advise reviewers not to click these as it could compromise reviewer anonymity.

4.1.5 Covid-19

UKRI is acutely aware of the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on research activities. Any disruptions to research activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be taken into consideration by our panels and committees when assessing an individual applicant's record of outputs, research achievements, and career progression in future grant rounds.

We understand that most researchers will have been affected during this period of disruption. We also recognise that some of these impacts are likely to be felt long after the acute phase of the pandemic, potentially affecting proposals for months or years to come.

We strongly encourage those who have been adversely affected by disruptions caused by the pandemic to continue to apply to our schemes, in the knowledge that historic impacts will be considered when assessing new proposals. We also want applicants to feel empowered to provide contextual information about the impacts of COVID-19 on their research, so that informed decisions can be made when assessing their proposal.

Our concern is not the details of what happened, but the impact it has had on the applicant.

Some examples of how applicants might have been affected are below:

- Change in personal circumstances, for example, illness, additional caring responsibilities.
- Clinical responsibilities (working on the front line, required to back-fill posts, etc) and any ongoing impacts during the transition back to research.
- Impact on access to facilities and normal work environment or furlough.
- Impact on research (including the hiatus of research within the NHS) and the production of preliminary data, development of collaborations or methodological/technique training and experience.
- Impact on publications or other outputs, including markers of esteem, for example, panel membership, presentation invitations, conference participation.
- Any other way in which the pandemic and/or its impact has affected the applicant, their career, or their ability to deliver their research.

Applicants are encouraged to highlight if and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted them. Importantly, applicants are asked to only disclose information that they are comfortable with being shared with our committees, panels and reviewers. Applicants are also encouraged to include, if relevant, examples of innovative ways they have responded to the crisis. Providing any information about how COVID-19 has impacted their research is optional and at the applicant's discretion.

Reviewers are asked to consider the provided information about the impact of COVID-19 as part of their assessment of an proposal and to make appropriate adjustments where needed. This could include, for example, considering track records and expectations regarding the development of the proposal – including the extent to which preliminary data has been provided – in the context of the applicant's individual circumstances.

4.2 Reviewer considerations

4.2.1 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.

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.

4.2.2 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](#).

4.2.3 Multidisciplinary Proposals

The FLF scheme supports fellowships in all areas of UKRI's remit, including multi- and interdisciplinary projects.

You therefore may wish to comment on the value of taking a multidisciplinary approach to the proposal in question and the likely impact on these (and other) fields.

You might also feel that you can only comment with confidence on a specific part of a proposal. In this situation you should provide a review on only the aspects that you are able to comment. Different reviewers will be asked to review the aspects you are not best placed to assess, and the assessment panel will then have the job of integrating these different comments.

When you receive a request to review an FLF proposal that seems a little outside of your area of expertise please remember that we may not be expecting you to comment on every aspect of the proposal and, if in doubt, please contact the FLF team before declining.

4.2.4 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.

4.2.5 Information Rights Legislation

All information we hold, including information around expert 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.

5 Completing the Review Form

This is a UKRI scheme, hosted by the 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.

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 the criteria can be found in [Annex E](#).

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

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

For business proposals, 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. This should be considered throughout the review.

5.1 Declaration of Interest

Before you complete a review, please ensure that you do not have a [conflict of interest](#) with the proposal.

Please refer to [Annex A](#) when completing this section. This section is not shared with the fellow.

5.2 Applicant, Training and Development

Please comment on the applicant considering the:

- **Appropriateness of their track record, expertise and skill set** – 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 they have the necessary level of skills, knowledge and experience to take forward the proposed project/programme
- **Current standard relative to their career stage and sector** – Whether their current research and/or innovation standing relative to their career stage puts them on a trajectory to become world-class. whether they have the potential to progress to a long-term research and/or innovation career path and that they understand the research and/or

innovation landscape at both the national and international level.

- **Training and professional development plans to realise their potential** – 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.
- **Proposed placements or collaborations** – Whether they have demonstrated the ability to choose and develop appropriate collaborations and networks nationally, internationally or across disciplines to maximise collaboration, partnership and knowledge exchange within and beyond the length of the fellowship.

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.

5.3 Leadership

Please comment on the applicant's leadership potential, including:

- **How the fellowship will enable the applicant to achieve research/innovation leadership** – Whether the proposed programme of work will position the applicant as a leader within their research/innovation field by the end of the fellowship and provide added value, over standard grant support.
- **The applicant's plan to implement good research/ innovation practice in relation to the modern research/business environment** – Whether they have identified and implemented good practice to ensure their research/innovation will have a high level of integrity and is trustworthy, has taken the wider impacts of research and innovation into account to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, and that equality, diversity and inclusion have been promoted.
- **Ability to inspire and lead others** – Whether they have demonstrated 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.
- **Plans to ensure the professional development of staff/colleagues and, if applicable, their team** – Whether they have a clear plan to support the development of their team and others, in both the delivery of the project and with broader professional/development opportunities, considering the appropriateness of training, access to facilities and level of support.

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

- Applicants may be less familiar with the expected standard of good research and innovation practices and may be less explicit with demonstrating this, so you may need to read between the lines when assessing their proposal. If in doubt, ask the question as part of your review for the applicant to respond to.

5.4 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 research/innovation novelty, and whether this is likely to lead to significant new understandings or developments** – 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.
- **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.

5.5 Host Organisation

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

- **Commitment to realising the potential of the applicant** – 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).
- **Level of commitment for supporting the fellow's programme of work (beyond Subsidy Control mandated % match funding if host is a business)** – Whether plans for supporting the fellow's programme of work (for example, enabling the time commitment needed; ensuring access to space, equipment/facilities, other resources and other relevant programmes) enable the applicant to maximise the social/economic impact of their work and 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.
- **Appropriateness of tailored training and career development support from host organisation** – Whether supported opportunities for development offered by the host organisation(s) (for example, 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)

will develop the applicant into an impactful and influential research and/or innovation leader, and commensurate with the development aims of the applicant.

5.6 Resources Requested

Please comment on:

- **Whether funds requested are appropriately justified to deliver the proposed project** – Whether all funds have been addressed in the Justification of Resources and whether the justification for these funds is clearly described and appropriate, highlighting any costs that you feel may be excessive, inappropriate or insufficiently justified. Whether the proposal has demonstrated an understanding of the amount of work to be done. Has the applicant identified the level of staffing (both the amount in full time equivalent and the experience and skills), travel and subsistence and other costs that will be needed in order to achieve the aims of the project? For example, in terms of the work planned for the research assistant, is the amount of work achievable within the timescale for someone with that level of expertise, and with the level of support and resource described?
- **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 and its potential impact.

Here are some illustrative examples of the sort of issues reviewers may be asked to consider under the value for money section, in the hope of further clarifying the way in which reviewers should be approaching this part of a review:

- We are not expecting reviewers to say whether £200 is the correct price for a flight but we would like them to consider whether all the trips that have been requested on a proposal are justified as being needed to conduct the research
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether the researcher should receive a certain salary, rather, we ask reviewers to assess whether there is sufficient work, of the appropriate level, to warrant a researcher being employed for the period which the proposal requests
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a project should cost £300,000 rather than £350,000, but we would like them to consider whether the total amount of resources (staff, trips or equipment) is warranted by the amount of project outputs and if the project is going to be completed in an effective way
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a particular piece of equipment should cost £1,000, but we would ask them to consider whether a piece of equipment offers the most efficient way to do that piece of work.

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

- Business hosted proposals are subject to different funding regulations to academic hosted proposals. You should not comment or score a proposal based on the percentage contribution requested as this is pre-determined by legal requirements.
- Business hosted proposals do not enter their costings in Je-S when submitting their proposal. Instead, business-based applicants will have completed a 'Finance Form for Business Applicants' to indicate their costings.

5.7 Ethics and Data Management

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

- **Whether the proposal 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.
- **Whether any animal use is fully justified in terms of need, species, number and conformance to guidelines** – Refer to [Annex B](#) for information.
- **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:

- Business 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.

5.8 Relevance to the Aims of the FLF

Please comment on:

- **The value added of the FLF funding mechanism, as opposed to a standard grant** – 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.
- **Whether the plans and scope of the programme justify long-term support** - Whether the proposal would provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle a difficult and novel challenge and support an adventurous, ambitious programme that might otherwise go unfunded.
- **How the fellowship will progress the applicant's career trajectory** – How will the fellowship enable an early career applicant to transition or establish independence. How the fellowship may foster a new research and innovation career path for the applicant (for example, facilitating the movement of the applicant between disciplines, organisations or sectors).

Please add any further comments, including how this proposal meets the [scheme specific criteria](#).

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

- 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.
- Whether the fellowship will enable the applicant to develop their own original and ambitious plans within a commercial or industry setting

5.9 Reviewer Expertise

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

For business proposals, 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.

5.10 Overall Assessment

Having provided comment against each of the above headings, please also provide a score, using the description best matches your overall comments for the proposal as detailed in **Table 1** below.

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

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

6 What Happens Next

The FLF Team will complete usability checks and you may receive a request to amend your review if it does not meet the checking criteria and be given 5 working days to amend it. Failure to amend the review means that it may not be used to assess the proposal.

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.

All proposals are moderated at the Sift 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.

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 the 'Overview of the assessment process' document in the 'Additional info' section of the [FLF Round 8 webpage](#).

7 Reviewer Recognition

Any reviewer that has 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](#).

8 Queries

If you have any queries about the review process or concerns regarding your written review, please contact the FLF team at 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: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org Phone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164

Annex A Conflicts of Interest

Introduction

UKRI is a publicly funded organisation and is accountable to government and the public for its actions and for the way it conducts its business, which must be undertaken in a way that is transparent and guards against potential conflicts of interest influencing the outcome of decisions.

UKRI defines a conflict of interest as a situation in which an individual's ability to exercise judgement or act in one role is, could be, or is seen to be impaired or otherwise influenced by their involvement in another role or relationship. Even a perception of competing interests, impaired judgement or undue influence may be damaging to UKRI's reputation.

The existence of an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest does not imply wrongdoing or that the assessor is not well-placed to make an impartial assessment. However, as an assessor, it is vital that they are seen to be impartial at all stages of the decision-making process. Any private, personal or commercial interests which might give rise to such a conflict of interest must be recognised, disclosed appropriately and either eliminated or properly managed.

Everybody involved in UKRI decision-making and funding processes must comply with [UKRI declaration of interest policy](#). UKRI will support all individuals to ensure compliance of the policy.

How and why do we collect conflict of interest information

Applicants may declare potential conflicts of interest in their application, related to individuals or organisations. UKRI will endeavour to avoid asking these potentially conflicted individuals/organisations to assess that application when feasible and if the request meets UKRI definitions of a conflict as defined in the UKRI Declaration of Interest Policy

Reporting, recording and managing potential conflicts effectively protects assessors (reviewers and panellists) and helps ensuring a transparent decision-making process.

UKRI acknowledges that individuals working in the same research and innovation field may know each other, and therefore, this does not prevent them from assessing an application. However, as assessors, they must declare any interest which they feel would prevent them giving an unbiased assessment, for UKRI awareness and evaluation.

Once an assessor declares interests, UKRI evaluates the declaration of interests and deem them as actual, perceived or no conflict. If the assessor's knowledge/ relationship with the application/applicants is such that they feel it would be difficult to be impartial when commenting on the application, then we ask them to decline the invitation to be part of the assessment by selecting "conflict of interest" as the reason why.

FLF Peer Review

When you are invited to review an application for the Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme, you will receive a summary of the application and the name(s) of the applicant(s). You must declare any known conflict of interest at this stage and select 'conflict of interest' as a reason when declining the invitation as a result of a known conflict of interest.

The FLF review form contains a confidential section on "declaration of interests", where reviewers need to disclose relevant information. If you are unsure as to whether you have a

conflict of interest, you should contact the FLF Team by emailing fellowsppeerreview@ukri.org.

If you accept an invitation to review and then identify a conflict of interest, you must let UKRI know as soon as possible so that the nature of the conflict can be assessed, and appropriate measures can be taken.

If a conflict becomes apparent, either to you or to UKRI, after the submission of a review, UKRI will classify your review as 'unusable' and not use it in the decision-making process.

Examples of conflicts of interest for assessors

The list below shows examples of conflicts of interest, including but not limited to review and panel stages. The list is not exhaustive; therefore, you must declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest, reflecting on the perception of both yourself and others.

Personal conflict

- You are named on the application.
- You have assisted the applicants in preparing the application.
- You are named as a project partner, subcontractor, visiting researcher or have any type of relationship with the application.
- You have written a letter of support for the application.
- You have been approached and agreed to be a member of a committee or board connected with the proposed project, for example an advisory group or steering committee/board.
- You are in close regular collaboration with any individuals named in the application, including investigators, research staff, collaborators, subcontractors and project partners, to an extent where you feel uncomfortable being involved in the discussion or you feel unable to give an unbiased opinion.
- You have a personal, financial or professional relationship with any individuals named in the application.
- You have been any of the applicants' PhD supervisor, line manager or group leader in the last three years, or the other way around.
- You stand to gain a financial or professional advantage from a particular outcome for an application which you are asked to review.

Organisational conflicts

- You are a current/Emeritus/secondment/visiting member at the same/proposed organisation as any individuals named on the application. This includes holding a position on the governance body or an honorary position within the applicants' current/proposed organisation.
- You belong to an organisation that is a project partner, subcontractor, are a visiting researcher from or to the Organisation.
- You have any type of recognised significant organisational collaboration with the application which would mean that your participation in the assessment would be seen as a conflict.
- You are in receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's current or proposed organisation.
- Fellowships only: you are at an organisation chosen by the candidate to be the hosting organisation for their fellowship.

Commercial or financial conflicts

- You have any commercial or financial/pecuniary interest, for example where you are a member of an organisation that may benefit financially, directly or indirectly, from any decision made.
- You have stocks or shares in a company named in an application.

Annex B 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 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 for example, 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 proposals involving the use of non-human primates, cats, dogs, pigs and equines will be referred to the NC3Rs via their expert review service. In some circumstances, proposals 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 proposals 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 proposal. 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 C Applying for a Fellowship on Job-Share Basis

Proposals 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 proposals from those wishing to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities.

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

Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Timeliness, in other words, 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, in other words, 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 proposal the skills and experience of both applicants, and why they are applying via a job-share arrangement and not two separate part-time proposals. It must also be stated in the proposal 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 recommended to contact the FLF team before applying on a job-share basis.

Only one proposal is required. Due to the limitations of Je-S it is not possible to have joint Principal Investigators (PIs) on the proposal 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 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 D Career Breaks and Flexible Working

The assessment of fellowship proposals 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 proposal. Further details on the nature of the absence and how it has affected track record, productivity and career progression may be provided if desired¹. Information provided will be used only to make appropriate adjustments when assessing an individual's track record, productivity and career progression.

¹ 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

Annex E 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 – for example, the scale, flexibility and duration offered – is well demonstrated, as opposed to more standard project grant support.

For business proposals, 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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, openness¹, 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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• A broad understanding of the research / innovation landscape at both the national and international level and clarity on how their research/innovation will contribute to it

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear plan to support the training and development of the fellow (and, if applicable, their team) and for gaining advice or mentorship; supporting not only the programme but also their broader professional development • Demonstrate an ability to identify and implement good practice in matters relating to the modern research environment such as Research Integrity, Responsible Research and Innovation, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Impact & Strategic Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance and potential impact of the research / innovation for society and / or the economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the potential short or long-term impacts, and how significant are they? ○ 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 (such as the seven technology families, as launched in the UK's Innovation Strategy), 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A demonstrable commitment from the host organisation to realizing 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