

## Guidance for potential fellowship applicants – how to prepare a proposal (and be ready for interview)

The guidance is aimed at those who are applying to the high-profile fellowship opportunities - NERC, Royal Society, etc. (see Annex) – and intend to hold a successful application in the Department. Elements of the guidance should still be useful to anyone applying to other early career researcher (ECR) opportunities. Your departmental facilitation contact is Gavin Bird ([gavin.bird@earth.ox.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.bird@earth.ox.ac.uk)).

Our advice	Your notes
<b>Phase I – 12 to 6 months before the deadline</b>	
Think about the <b>research idea</b> you want to develop into a fellowship proposal. Is it the right sort of scale or ambition for the scheme? Can you make the case that it will allow you to stand out amongst your peers? <b>Consult with potential Faculty mentors</b>	
Think about <b>timing</b> – how much time on your contract is left, and so when might you need to apply and then start an award?	
Is <b>anything needed</b> before your research idea can be at its strongest (e.g., publication, pilot data generation, fieldwork, participation in a cruise, access to a Research Council facility)?	
What are the most <b>appropriate opportunities</b> you might apply to, given your research interests and your post-PhD experience? <b>Consult <a href="#">Gavin Bird</a></b>	
<b>Phase II – 6 to 3 months before the deadline</b>	
Identify a Faculty <b>mentor/host (Gavin and Tamsin Mather can help)</b> and ask for explicit support of your proposal (i.e., a willingness to host if you are successful). When you have this, let <b>Gavin</b> know.	
Is your research idea the right sort of <b>scale or ambition</b> for the scheme? Are you likely to be a competitive candidate? Discuss with <b>Faculty mentors</b>	
Confirm your <b>eligibility</b> to apply to the funder – ECR and post-PhD award timings, mobility, etc.	

Our advice	Your notes
Obtain and study scheme application guidance. <b>Check with Gavin if needed</b>	
Check ( <b>with Gavin</b> ) on internal and funder deadlines. Create a schedule of proposal development to meet these without panic.	
Identify additional faculty who can provide <b>internal review</b> of your proposal <b>(Gavin/Tamsin Mather can help)</b>	
Discuss <b>project design</b> with your mentor, based on funder criteria and application templates	
Ask <b>Gavin</b> for <b>previous funding proposals</b> that are potentially related to your proposal.	
Register on funder application Portal	
Identify external contacts for references or letters of support on application (if needed)	
Discuss the feasibility and timing of your plans with SRF (lab) managers, whether Earth Sciences or other departments (if needed).	
Check on Research Council facility usage/ship-time, etc. requirements (if needed).	
Discuss any other facility usage, collaborative requirements with non-Oxford sources (if needed).	
Start to <b>draft your proposal</b> (perhaps in outline form first) and seek early feedback from your mentor.	
<b>Phase III – Starting at least 6 weeks before deadline</b>	
Discuss <b>resources and budget</b> for your proposal with your mentor. Are costs eligible, realistic and feasible, given funder rules? Discuss with Gavin, SRF managers, etc. then work on budget outputs	
Provide the right University contacts with access to your proposal on on-line systems (esp. Gavin, referees, sponsoring Faculty, HoD)	

Our advice	Your notes
Ensure referees can provide their references in time for submission by the deadline (if needed)	
Timetable sharing draft copies of the proposal with your Faculty host, mentors and other 'critical friends', receiving feedback and redrafting	
Schedule in final proof-reading of proposal ahead of submission to the Oxford internal deadline (almost always one week before the funder deadline but depending on any internal quota review system)	
Provide Gavin with a copy of your final proposal (if needed).	
<b>Phase IV – Post-submission (in case of interview)</b>	
Share interview information with supporting Faculty and Gavin, including providing the <b>date and format of the interview.</b>	
Contact <b>previous applicants</b> for guidance on interview technique – Gavin can help	
Discuss your availability for <b>mock interviews</b> with Gavin, who will canvas relevant Faculty for their attendance. Two mock interviews will allow advice from the first to be incorporated into the second. The latter should be a few days before the formal interview	
If the interview is on-line, check the program to be used (inc. registration requirements) and presentation/file format issues	
Prepare the <b>presentation</b> , discussing with your Faculty or any external mentors during the drafting process	
Prepare lists of <b>potential interviewer questions</b> covering all aspects of project implementation and management, and prepare answers	
Respond to mock-interview advice from panelists, including responses to questions	

## Summary of popular Fellowship opportunities during the calendar year

ver. February 2024

Funder	Scheme	Duration	Eligibility (post PhD)	Funding model	Indirects covered?	Indicative Annual Deadline	Comments	Web site
Royal Commission for the Exhibition 1851	Research Fellowship	3 years	ECRs within 3 years of PhD award	100% of salary. £10k p.a. research expenses	No	January	Can't be held at same institution as that of PhD studies	<a href="#">Research Fellowship</a>
Leverhulme Trust	Early Career Fellowship	3 years	ECRs hold a PhD (<4 years post-PhD) but not in a permanent post	£6k p.a. research expenses. 50% salary costs up to £50k, £25k and £25k	No	February	<b>Applications not usually supported by department.</b> Will require secured match funding at the point of application	<a href="#">Early Career Fellowship</a>
Royal Society	Newton International Fellowship	2 years	ECRs hold a PhD (<7 years post-PhD)	Research Expenses limit of £280k. Salary plus institutional costs at 80% FEC	Yes	March	Applicants should be working outside the UK and should not hold UK citizenship at the time of application	<a href="#">Newton International Fellowship</a>
All Souls College	Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships	5 years	ECRs recently awarded PhD	Salary. £5k p.a. lab consumables	No	early September	Requires agreement of dept. to host inc. discussion on 'bench' fees. Opportunity arises every other year	<a href="#">Appointments</a>
Royal Society	University Research Fellowship	5 + 3 years	Between 3 and 8 years post-PhD	80% reimbursement of salary and institutional costs, 100% of research costs	Yes	early September	Application to cover 8 years of research plans	<a href="#">URF</a>
STFC	Ernest Rutherford Fellowship	5 years	ECRs hold a PhD but not in a permanent post	100% FEC and 80% reimbursement	Yes	mid September	Internal competition (June/July onwards) to find candidates prior to deadline	<a href="#">Announced here</a>
EC Horizon Europe	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Post-doctoral Fellowship	2 years	Must hold PhD	Unit costs for fellow and institution	Yes - management and overheads unit cost	early September	Requires mobility condition to be met. UK Association to Horizon Europe also required	<a href="#">EC Portal</a>
Royal Academy of Engineering	Fellowship	5 years	ECRs hold a PhD (<4 years post-PhD)	100% FEC and 80% reimbursement up to £625k	Yes	late September	Internal MPLS competition to find candidates, with mid-July deadline	<a href="#">RAE Research Fellowships</a>
EC Horizon Europe	European Research Council Starting Grant	5 years	Between 2 and 7 years post-PhD	Direct costs plus 25% indirects	Yes	late October	UK Association to Horizon Europe required	<a href="#">EC Portal</a>
Royal Astronomical Society	Research Fellowship/Norman Lockyer Fellowship	3 years	Within 4 years of PhD award	100% salary and research expenses (@ £2k p.a.)	No	October	Annual alternating schemes. Astronomical topics, including solar system and planetary science	<a href="#">Fellowships</a>
NERC	Independent Research Fellowship	5 years	Must hold PhD and up to 8 years post-doc experience	100% FEC and 80% reimbursement	Yes	early November	High profile, high standard of candidate	<a href="#">Announced here</a>
Royal Society	Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship	5 years	Must hold PhD and up to 6 years post-doc experience	80% reimbursement of salary and institutional costs, 100% of research costs	Yes	early November	Applicants must demonstrate a need for flexible support due to personal circumstances	<a href="#">Dorothy Hodgkin</a>
Christ Church, Trinity, Magdalen, Merton and Jesus Colleges	Junior Research Fellowships (JRF)	3 years	Within 2 years of PhD award	Salary. Provision of research expenses varies between College, from £0 to low £ks	No	various Autumn/Winter	Requires support of Earth Sciences as hosting department prior to fellowship interview	Various
Schmidt Futures	The Eric and Wendy Schmidt AI in Science Postdoctoral Fellowship Program	1 + 1 years	Must have completed a PhD	Salary plus <£10k consumables	Yes	Several during the year	Internal application process	<a href="#">MPLS site</a>

### Note on JRF

Potential JRF applicants should contact a Departmental (research) host prior to application. The Research Facilitator should also be contacted at the same time to discuss broader departmental support of your proposal.