

BBSRC GUIDANCE NOTES FOR FELLOWSHIP (FUTURE LEADER FELLOWSHIP AND DAVID PHILLIPS FELLOWSHIP) REVIEWERS USING THE JE-S SYSTEM

These notes are intended to provide reviewers with specific guidance for completion of the fellowship reviewer form (used for the Future Leader Fellowship and the David Phillips Fellowship). The notes should be read in conjunction with the reviewer protocols. Specific guidance is available for each individual section of the report that you are asked to complete.

When reviewing fellowship proposals please pay particular attention to the **scientific excellence of the proposed project as your thoughts will form the basis of the scientific review of this proposal.**

A full justification for your assessment, indicating the strengths and weakness of the proposal, should be provided. In identifying the strengths and weaknesses you should clearly state which should be accorded the greater significance and why. It is also helpful to raise issues or concerns with the proposal in the form of explicit questions which can be used for short-listed applicants at the interview stage.

Important- please note that fellowship applicants have a wide range of research experience and this should be taken into account when considering the potential of individual applicants.

The **Future Leader Fellowship** provides **support for researchers wishing to undertake independent research and gain leadership skills.** The fellowship supports the transition of early stage researchers to fully independent research leaders by allowing them to **undertake a piece of independent research within a host lab.** Applicants may have between 0 and 5 years of active postdoctoral research experience; this should be taken into account when considering the outputs of applicants and their demonstrations of independence.

The **David Phillips Fellowship** provides support for researchers wishing to **establish their first independent research group.** Applicants have no limit placed on their years of active postdoctoral research experience. The previous limit of 10 years has been removed in response to our 2015 review of *BBSRC Strategy for Investing in Fellowships*. Please see www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/policies/reviews/consultations/1503-review-investing-in-fellowships/ for full details. As such reviewers should ensure that it is the upward trajectory of an applicant's career that is being assessed rather than their total outputs.

Scoring of proposals

When carrying out your review please be aware that you will be asked to give your overall assessment of the proposal based on the following **scoring schemes**; one for the **applicant** and one for the **scientific excellence of the proposed research programme.** BBSRC fellowships are highly competitive awards that receive a large number of applications. Due to this high demand please be frank in highlighting any flaws in proposals and **use the full range of scores available**; only use the top scores for the very best candidates.

| APPLICANT SCORE | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Score | Description | Definition |
| 6 | Exceptional Fundable | Candidates who are of exceptional all round standard, and who exhibit exceptional potential as an independent researcher or group leader. You think that this Fellowship should be supported as a priority. |
| 5 | Excellent Fundable | Candidates who are of excellent all round standard, and who exhibit excellent potential as an independent researcher or group leader. You think that this Fellowship should be supported. |
| 4 | Very Good Fundable | Candidates who are of very good all round standard, and who exhibit very good potential as an independent researcher or group leader. You think that this Fellowship should be supported if funds are available. |
| 3 | Good Fundable | Candidates who are of good all round standard, and who exhibit good potential as an independent researcher or group leader. You think that this Fellowship could be supported if funds are available. |
| 2 | Not Competitive Not Fundable | Candidates with positive qualities but who do not as yet exhibit sufficient potential to be considered as an independent researcher or group leader. You do not think this Fellowship should be supported. |
| 1 | Unfundable Not Fundable | Candidates who do not reach the required standard in relation to either past contributions or future potential. You do not think this Fellowship should be supported. |

| SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH PROGRAMME | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Score | Description | Definition |
| 6 | Exceptional Fundable | Transformative science, which is of exceptional-scientific merit, novel, timely and highly likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research programme should definitely be supported and it would be a loss not to do so. |
| 5 | Excellent Fundable | High-quality science, which is of excellent-scientific merit, novel, timely and likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research programme should be supported. |
| 4 | Very Good Fundable | Reasonable science, which is of very good-scientific merit, novel, timely and likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research programme should be supported if funds are available. |
| 3 | Good Fundable | Worthy science, but not of a level to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this project could be supported if funds are available. |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| 2 | Not Competitive Not Fundable | Science that lacks novelty and will make only a marginal contribution to our understanding of the subject. You think this research programme should not be supported. |
| 1 | Unfundable Not Fundable | Flawed science that is unlikely to contribute to our understanding of the subject. You think this research programme should not be supported. |

You should note that your review will be provided, unattributed, to the applicant on request.

Reviewer Self-Assessment

Comments in this section will not be sent to the applicant but will be provided to the Peer Review Committee or Panel.

Knowledge of the Applicant

Indicate briefly in what capacity you know the applicant(s) and their work. If there are any potential conflicts of interest, please contact the BBSRC Office before reading the proposal. Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- Employed by the same institution as the applicant(s)
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicants(s)
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
- Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)
- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

Your areas of expertise

Indicate briefly the areas of your expertise that are relevant to your assessment. Please indicate any areas of the proposal that you consider you are not qualified to assess, to enable the Office to select additional referees in these areas.

Suitability of Applicant (Person)

Future Leader Fellowships support excellent early career researchers who have demonstrated high potential and who wish to conduct their own independent research within a host laboratory. When assessing Future Leader Fellowship applicants, please take into account the career stage they are at;

those just completing their PhD are likely to have achieved less than those with 5 years of postdoctoral research experience.

David Phillips Fellowships support outstanding scientists in the early stage of their research careers who wish to establish themselves as independent researchers. In making these awards, BBSRC is seeking to identify scientists who could be expected to be among the leaders of their generation of bio-scientists. David Phillip Fellowship applicants can have a range of research experience, please take this into account when assessing individuals.

Because BBSRC Fellowships are designed to provide a career boost to outstanding researchers, there is a strong emphasis on the scientific potential of the applicants and how they will use the fellowship to boost their career. In this section please briefly comment on:

- Research achievements to date (taking into account the applicant's level of research experience, are these on an upward trajectory?)
- Personal achievements e.g. prizes, awards, honours, presentations, student supervision, collaborations etc. (taking into account the applicant's level of research experience)
- Number and quality of publications (taking into account the applicant's level of research experience and research field)
- Scientific independence
- **Future Leader Fellow** applicants: level of thought given to continued professional development activities

Choice of host institution (Research environment)

BBSRC fellowship applicants must demonstrate they have given full and careful consideration to the choice of host institution(s). Reasons should be related to the scientific infrastructure and environment, the provision of additional support, the opportunity to develop new skills, and the support for career development present at the host institution. Reasons for the choice of host should be stated clearly within the proposal.

We ask reviewers to take account of the investment that host organisations are committed to making if an award is successful. This may be through co-funding particular aspects of the proposal, a commitment to enhance the fellowship with additional funding or improved access to research facilities. BBSRC also encourages proposals which are able to use BBSRC's investment to leverage additional funding from other sources.

Please note that there is no requirement for applicants to move to a new research organisation as part of their fellowship.

Scientific Excellence (Project)

As stated, please consider this carefully as your thoughts will form the basis of the scientific review of this proposal. It is not necessary to extensively restate the programme plan other than as an aid to making critical comment.

Proposals should not be over ambitious or of a complexity that would not allow researchers to make progress or to develop new ideas. Proposals should explain clearly the expected programme of work with a sensible timetable, objectives and clear milestones, and well thought through experiments. Scientific excellence will be paramount, although allowance may be made for less experienced researchers in the presentation of their proposal.

Future Leader Fellowship proposals should be scientifically excellent but not be over ambitious or of a complexity that would not allow the fellow to make progress or to develop new ideas that could form the basis of their future career as a research leader. When reviewing the skills and experience of **Future Leader Fellows** allowances should be made for those applicants who have limited or no postdoctoral research experience. Furthermore, please consider if the proposed project will give the **Future Leader Fellow** the opportunity to develop their potential by exposing them to new methods, techniques and ideas

When reviewing BBSRC fellowship proposals please consider:

- Clarity of hypotheses, aims, and objectives

Comment on whether the aims and objectives are understandable and unambiguous, and whether it will be clear when the objectives have been achieved. If the work is proposing or testing hypotheses, please comment on whether these hypotheses are clear and appropriate for meeting the objectives.

- Strengths and weaknesses of the experimental design

Comment on the strengths and the weaknesses of the experiments that are proposed.

- Feasibility of the work programme, given the track-record of the applicant

Comment on the skills and experience of the applicant and team (including project partners) to deliver the proposed research.

Also comment on evidence of the applicant's scientific independence (particularly in instances where Future Leader Fellow applicants propose to continue research within their current research group or David Phillips Fellow applicants propose to remain at their current research organisation).

All fellowship applicants must be able to demonstrate that if awarded a fellowship that they will be genuinely working independently of senior colleagues with whom they might previously have collaborated or for whom they might have worked in a supporting role. There should be indications within the research programme that this will be the case. Short-listed applicants will be tested on this at interview.

Strategic Relevance

- Relevance to industry and other stakeholders

Comment on any relevance the application may have in providing underpinning science which meets industrial needs, or addresses the potential policy requirements for other BBSRC stakeholders.

- Relevance to BBSRC strategy

BBSRC has a set of Council-wide strategic priorities (research and policy) that are applicable to all aspects of our funding; as described here www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/priorities. Comment on whether and to what extent the proposal addresses the research and policy priority areas of BBSRC.

Economic and Social Impact

Impact refers to the benefits scientific research has on the economy, society and knowledge. Examples of impact outputs are available at <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/research/impact/>. A key element in this factor will be the arrangements that exist within the project to achieve the necessary interaction with the relevant users who will ensure that these aims are realised. You should comment specifically on the Pathways to Impact, giving consideration to the following:

- Have the key areas where impact should be explored by the researcher during the course of the fellowship been clearly identified?
- Have clear, realistic and appropriate objectives been given?
- Are the proposed activities appropriate to the research, are both routine and novel ways of engaging end-users proposed and are the activities likely to generate very significant potential for impact.
- Has the management of the impact activities been well thought out?
- Is the ability to achieve the impact objectives clearly evident?

Value for Money

Fellowships now awarded by the UK Research Councils reflect the introduction in universities of full economic costing (fEC) at project level. Referees may wish to comment on the extent to which the resources requested, relative to the anticipated scientific gains and training activities proposed to be undertaken, represent an attractive investment of BBSRC funds and whether there is evidence of significant support from the host institution. Resources under Directly Incurred, Directly Allocated (except estates costs) and Exceptions can be assessed for their necessity and appropriateness. Estates and Indirect costs must not be considered, and the overall costs of the fellowship should not normally affect your assessment of its quality

Due to the scale of the investment made in **David Phillips Fellows**, reviewers should note that **value for money is an essential criterion against which David Phillips Fellowship applications should be assessed, alongside excellence and other key criteria**. For this competition reviewers should be looking for written evidence that the host organisation will contribute significant support, either financially or in-kind if an award is made. Proposals that do not provide clear evidence that the

research programme is highly competitive in terms of value for money, or which lack additional funding commitments, are unlikely to be successful.

Applicants have been asked to ensure that the Partnership Details section of the Je-S proforma contains **details of all institutional support** that will be made available if the applicant is successful in obtaining a BBSRC award. In addition, the **justification of resources attachment must clearly show why the resources requested are good value for money and why it is in BBSRC's interests to provide investment**. Also letters of support from all parties contributing financial or other support should be uploaded to the proposal under the Letters of Support attachment giving full and accurate details of the commitments being made.

Interview Questions

Please indicate any questions or issues that you think should be addressed by the applicant if they reach the interview stage.

Overall Assessment

Based on the scoring schemes described on pages 1-2, please consider the full range of scores available to:

1. Indicate an overall score for this **APPLICANT**, taking into account the definitions of each score. This score will be used to help inform Committee E during the shortlisting of proposals. Please be prepared to use the full range of scores but tick one box only.
2. Indicate an overall score for the **SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH PROGRAMME**, taking into account the definitions of each score. **This score will form the basis of the proposal's scientific review** and will help determine those candidates invited to interview, so please consider this carefully. Please be prepared to use the full range of scores but tick one box only.