

BBSRC GUIDANCE NOTES FOR ANNIVERSARY FUTURE LEADER FELLOWSHIP (AFLF) REVIEWERS USING THE JE-S SYSTEM

These notes are intended to provide reviewers with specific guidance for the completion of the BBSRC Anniversary Future Leader Fellowship (AFLF) reviewer form. They 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.

A full justification for your assessment, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, particularly the research proposed, 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. Approximately 150 AFLF applications have been received for the 12 fellowships available. Due to this high demand for the fellowship 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.

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.

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 or intended host institution(s) of the applicant
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicant
- Working closely with the applicant, for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
- Holding a current or honorary position on the governing body within the institution(s) of the applicant
- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's institution(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.

Proposal Assessment:

All comments in the following sections will be sent, unedited, to the applicant on request. Your identity will not be revealed.

Suitability of Applicant

AFLFs are designed to support excellent early career researchers who have demonstrated high potential and who wish to conduct their own independent research within a host laboratory. The AFLF will support the transition of early stage researchers to fully independent research leaders. There is therefore a strong emphasis on the scientific potential of the applicants. When assessing the applicant, please take into account the career stage they are at; those just completing their PhD are likely to have less publications than those with 5 years of postdoctoral research experience. In this section please briefly comment on:

- Personal achievements e.g. prizes, awards, honours, presentations, student supervision etc.
- Research achievements to date (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)
- Thought given to continued professional development activities

Choice of Host Institution(s)

Comment on whether there is evidence that the applicant has given full and careful consideration to the choice of host institution(s). Reasons should be related to the scientific infrastructure and research environment of the proposed host and the reasons for that choice should be made clear in the proposal. If the applicant proposes to remain within their current group or institution, they must fully justify this decision.

Scientific Excellence

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 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. Proposals should explain clearly the expected programme of work with a sensible timetable, objectives and clear milestones, with well thought through experiments. When reviewing the proposal please consider:

- The clarity of hypotheses, aims and objectives, novelty, feasibility and quality of the project
- Opportunity for the project to contribute to developing the potential of applicants by exposing them to new methods, techniques and ideas
- Evidence of the applicant's scientific independence (particularly in instances where the applicant proposes to continue research within their current research group)

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 their host group to deliver the proposed research. When reviewing skills and experience, allowances should be made for those applicants who have limited or no postdoctoral research experience.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that if awarded a fellowship they will be genuinely working independently of senior colleagues with whom they might previously have collaborated or worked for in a supporting role. Applicants short-listed for interview will also be tested on this.

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 <http://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/science/impact/index.html>. A key element in this factor will be the arrangements that exist within the project to achieve the necessary interaction with relevant users that 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 researchers 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.

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

Please 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.

Score	Description	Definition
6	Exceptional Fundable	Candidates who are of exceptional all round standard, and who exhibit exceptional potential as an independent researcher. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

Please 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 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.

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.