

GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowships webinar 12 August 11.00 Q&A

General

Where should applications be submitted to?

Applications should be submitted to the DTC to which you are applying.

Is it necessary to apply through the DTC one graduated from? Is it possible to apply to a research centre/organisation from any other DTC?

You can apply to do the fellowship at any of the research organisations which make up the DTC from which you graduated.

The application form asks for my 'research organisation reference' – what is this?

Please contact your Research Office who can provide you with this reference.

By the time the overall GCRF funding increase to £10 million over the next few years, will there be more fellowships available per DTC?

We plan to do more activities with the DTCs so there will be more opportunities; however these are not planned yet. There will also be postdoctoral fellowships available through the DTPs; however the proportion of these which will be GCRF focused is not yet known.

Eligibility

About eligibility, just to confirm, I have a fixed-term contract ending in December 2016. Am I eligible?

Eligibility depends on when you submitted your PhD and the proposed start date of your fellowship. Please see the call documents for further details. The scheme is not open to applicants who are established, permanent members of staff so if you are on a fixed-term contract, this is fine.

I have partial funding on a postdoctoral project (50%) for the first 6 months of 2017. Is it possible to start the fellowship at part-time and then move to full-time?

No, part-time fellowships are only for those on part-time contracts. The fellowships are intended as full-time opportunities. There will be other postdoctoral fellowship opportunities available in the future, as detailed on our website: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/postgraduate-careers/early-career-researchers/>.

Would it be an asset to have connections to other ESRC bids?

Whilst connections to other ESRC bids are not mandatory and applicants will not be penalised for not having connections, we encourage collaboration and partnership between ESRC grant holders.

The deadline for applications of 9th September, is this fixed?

Yes, all DTCs have the same deadline and this cannot be moved in order for fellows to start as soon as possible.

How many fellowships will there be for each DTC?

Each DTC will award five fellowships. If for any reason they cannot make five awards, they will be allocated to another DTC that has demand and a reserve list.

Will not having any publications affect my chances?

Not necessarily. You will be judged on your experience and how you present this in your proposal. Reviewers will look at your career stage when making their assessment.

If all potential papers have been published, does it affect my application given this fellowship focuses on transition?

Not necessarily. If this is the case, the emphasis of your proposal could be on other activities if publications have already been achieved.

Start date

What is the latest possible start date?

The last week of January 2017.

Could it be earlier?

Yes, we want fellows to start as soon as possible and realistically this could be mid to late October.

Can I start in February?

No, fellowships must commence by January 2017 at the latest.

By when do successful candidates have to confirm that they accept the fellowship, if awarded?

Successful candidates should confirm their acceptance as soon as possible as we would like fellows to start as early as possible. DTCs will also have a reserve list of applicants to offer the fellowships to if someone is unable to accept the offer.

Focus of the fellowship

Should the title of the proposal be the title of the thesis or a new title for the fellowship?

It should be a new title for the fellowship.

The specification states that the fellowship should be based on PhD work. Does this make work based on current postdoctoral research ineligible?

The fellowship is expected to be related to the focus of the PhD. If the postdoctoral research is related to the PhD focus, then this would be fine for the fellowship. If the postdoctoral research is not related to the PhD, then it would not be suitable for the fellowship and our New Investigator scheme may be more appropriate (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/new-investigator-grants/>).

The call has numerous references to 'proposed research' yet makes clear that there should be no new research and that this is not a research programme. When the

application asks for the aims of the proposed research does it actually mean the aims of the fellowship?

The fellowship is designed to build upon your PhD experience and develop your skills for future research. Whilst it is not a research programme, limited additional research activity directly linked to the PhD can be undertaken as part of the fellowship activities. For example, testing methodologies developed as part of the PhD.

Can you please explain the 25% new research issue further? Is the idea to do knowledge exchange of your PhD findings? Or can I do new research to apply my particular methodology to a development context as part of this fellowship?

It can be both.

Regarding the 'Objectives' section in the application form: it states at the beginning "List the main objectives of the proposed research" - but all bulletpoints stated as examples are on non-research activity. So talking about the objectives and summary only- what can you recommend for those who struggle to mix the research objective (the wider theme) and the career development objectives (the work programme)? How do we combine these two levels in the Objectives and Summary section of the application form?

The objectives and summary section should refer to the objectives and a summary of your fellowship.

You should include all of the objectives of your fellowship, including your career development objectives and the objectives of any limited related additional research you plan to undertake.

The case for support guidance states that the 'bulk of your case should focus on what you plan to do'. Do you mean the bulk of this document should focus on what you plan to do? If so how should this be structured given that you have set out that I need to talk about my completed PhD, my achievements and impact.

The case for support should be structured to cover the following three headings:

- Abstract/summary of progress of thesis - this shouldn't be more than one side of A4
- Research-related achievements
- Impacts of your research

These three criteria need to cover what has been done so far as part of the PhD, but also how you will build on them as part of the fellowship. The workplan attachment is more focussed on what you plan to do within the course of the fellowship.

Given this is mostly about fellow's capacity building and setting them up as successful researchers for future, how much of our effort in preparing the fellowship proposal should be on carrying out PhD related study during the fellowship or setting up for future research?

This will depend on your experiences following your PhD; everyone will have different experiences so applicants should draw on what is relevant to their careers and their experiences post-PhD.

Should the objectives be focusing on making impacts or on research itself?

It will be both. The package of activities is about taking research to the next level and the making impact will be about developing these links.

Do I need to mention future training needs as I only saw training completed to date in the call specification?

Yes, the proposal should mention the training you need to develop yourself as a researcher and identify what training you need.

Is capacity building allowed i.e. training of local teams?

As this would be of direct benefit, this is fine.

Content of the PhD research: what is the place in the application where you would want to see the PhD research and its link to the objectives summarised?

The case for support attachment is where we would expect to see this.

Can the proposal have a focus on developing the basis for a larger grant application (possibly GCRF)? So it's framed as a foundation building for a larger grant, and foundation activities which needs to continue in a larger project?

This would be fine, however the fellowship proposal needs to be focused on the aims and objectives of the postdoctoral fellowship.

International visits

Regarding institutional visits, can NGOs be considered as host institutions or should visits only be to academic institutions?

International visits can be to academic or non-academic organisations.

How important is it that the institutional visits are done in a developing country if I've already spent significant time in that country for my research?

The call specification states that international visits are encouraged and funding for visits of up to four months can be supported. However, if time has already been spent in the developing country relevant to the proposal, visits can be for short periods. Applicants can also spend time in a developed country for training not available elsewhere.

You said fieldwork should be up to 4 months. Are we expected to live in the UK during the fellowship?

Yes, you should reside in reasonable travelling distance from your host organisation.

Do the four months refer to the total time that can be spent abroad, including additional field research, career development, networking, and institutional visits and how much of the fellowship needs to be spent physically at the host institution?

Up to four months can be spent overseas, on fieldwork, training, etc. throughout the course of the award. This time can be made up of separate, short visits or a long visit. As the fellowship is

intended to support your academic career within the UK, we expect you to spend the majority of your time in the UK at your host organisation.

Can you use funding for visits to other academic institutions or NGOs in another developed country for possible training and/or a small research component? If so, would it have to be a part of the sanctioned four months travel abroad or can it be additional travel for promoting learning abroad?

As stated earlier, the majority of your time must be spent in the UK at your host organisation. We recognise that some countries will offer specialist training not available in the UK or the developing country, and that some will be more expensive than others. If there are countries and training courses you want to visit you should make the case in your proposal. Any visits to countries outside the UK will be included in the four months travel allowed.

What would you expect to see in the description and work plan of overseas visits? I am planning two weeks at two institutions each, one in the UK one in Australia for networking, publication collaborations, and for additional mentorship and possibly giving a research seminar - does this sound reasonable?

The workplan should include a summary of your planned activities when overseas as reviewers will need to know what you plan to do when there. The reviewers will determine whether these activities are reasonable for the fellowship.

Can you invite researchers from abroad to visit the UK and include costs for this?

Yes, this is fine.

Would there be funding for visits to academic institutions within the UK - apart from the 4 months mentioned for outside the UK?

Yes, you can include costs for activities such as visits, training, and conferences within the UK.

Mentors

Can the mentor be from a non-academic organisation in the developing country where the fellow will work?

You can have a secondary mentor at another organisation, including an overseas organisation or a non-academic organisation; however your primary mentor must be at your host research organisation.

What is the role of the mentor expected to be?

The mentor should have a strong interest in the applicant's field of research and provide links to relevant academics and users, and help them to develop their networks. In addition, the mentor should provide support through the institutional channels. It is expected that the mentor will review progress and funding can be claimed for the mentor's time; we suggest that mentoring time should be 1-2 hours per week. If you have more than one mentor, this time allowance can be split between them.

Can the mentor be your PhD supervisor?

We would encourage applicants to consider how the fellowship will be a step forward and how they might broaden their horizons from their PhD, so we don't expect the mentor to be the PhD supervisor. However if you can demonstrate that there is no-one else with the relevant expertise within your host organisation, then the PhD supervisor would be fine as long as this is adequately justified.

Can I choose my PhD co-supervisor (not main supervisor) as my mentor? Will it affect my application?

The PhD supervisor should not normally be the mentor, however it is up to the applicant to demonstrate in the proposal that this has been considered and why this person is the most appropriate to be the mentor.

What are the benefits for the mentors so that they have an incentive to supervise you?

Mentors would be interested in this role as they would have a strong interest in your field, and also to support the next generation of social scientists.

Do mentors need to sign any forms or is it just the letter of support and CV that they need to provide?

The mentor just needs to provide the combined mentor statement and CV. They do not need to sign anything.

You mentioned it would be reasonable to have a secondary mentor in an overseas institution. Would it be ok to have secondary / co mentors in the same RO or another RO within the DTC (or elsewhere in the UK)?

Yes, this would be fine.

Regarding the senior status of my mentor, the most fitting mentor is a lecturer and has recently published his first monograph. He is not very senior but where do you draw the line here?

It's difficult to give a hard and fast rule as it is ultimately for the applicant to justify. If the mentor has already been through career progression it would be good, but in this case a second mentor could be considered as this would strengthen the proposal.

If you choose to have two mentors, how would you put this into the application? Do we add two mentor CVs and can we cost both of them in for 1hr a week?

Yes, a CV is still required for both. The mentor statement should be completed by the primary mentor, but should cover the input of the secondary mentor. This should be combined with the CV for the primary mentor and be a maximum of 2 sides of A4. The CV for the secondary mentor should be one side of A4.

You can include costs for both mentors, but it would be advisable to speak to your proposed mentors and your RO for what is most appropriate.

Letters of support and attachments

Does the internship have to be a formal one, as it can be hard to get a letter in time from these organisations?

It doesn't have to be a formal offer but it should still be included and costed into your proposal if it's planned. If it isn't a formal offer, it may be worth having a back-up or alternative just in case.

What do the letters of support from overseas organisations need to state? Do they need to be in English?

Letters of support should detail how the organisation will be supporting you whilst you are based there. For example, they should confirm:

- Office space
- Mentoring (if applicable)
- Training
- Facilitating links with other organisations.

Letters should be in English as they will be used by assessors. If they are not in English, a translated version should also be provided.

Regarding partnerships with users, are letters of support recommended or obligatory?

Letters of support should detail how you will be engaging with the user, so although not obligatory, they are encouraged.

The Head of Department statement, does it need to be the Head of School/Faculty or can it be the Head of discipline area?

You can speak to your DTC about who would be most appropriate to complete this but it should be someone at the school or faculty level.

I am hoping to move to a new department and university where my mentor will be. Is the new head of department expected to write statement without knowing my work or can I seek this statement from my former head of department?

The head of department statement must be from the new institution where you will be based. If it's within the same DTC, we'd expect there to be internal link up so speak to your DTC in the first instance.

Can you explain the list of publications? It suggests that this should be a bibliography, but as this is not a research proposal, where do you envisage applicants referring to literature?

There is still place for a bibliography in this type of proposal, and it is relevant given the direction of travel for this career stage. In particular, the case for support and workplan may include references to literature. It is simply a reference list, not a bibliographic essay. Speak to your Research Office if you are unsure.

Is the referee statement referring to the mentor?

No, the referee statement is to assist in the assessment process. The referee statement should not be provided by the mentor. The referee can be the PhD supervisor, but if the PhD supervisor is the proposed mentor, the referee statement should be provided by another academic.

Could the second mentor be a referee as well?

No, the referee statement should not be provided by any of the mentors.

Impact

The call does not mention clearly the pathways to impact, could you explain how to do complete this section?

Impacts of your research so far and planned impact should be covered in the case for support and the mandatory question in the application form, there is not a separate Pathways to impact attachment as impact should be at the heart of the proposal and woven through any planned activities. The Impact toolkit and other guidance on the ESRC website is very useful for completing this section (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/what-is-impact/>).

Am I correct, I need to develop the pathways to impact within the Case for Support, right?

Yes, the pathways to impact should be integrated throughout the Case for Support, but it should also be in the workplan.

The call states that up to 10 per cent of the overall budget should be allocated for impact related activities, which is a lot. Do impact activities include travel costs for networking?

The ten per cent of the budget is a recommendation however impact should be at the heart of the fellowship activities therefore the majority of activities will be impact related, especially as it is related to the primary beneficiaries in a developing country.

ODA compliance

Does the ODA compliance statement require demonstration of direct impacts in all instances? Or is it sufficient to show how the research contributes to scholarship/policy discussion on development in an ODA-recipient country?

You will need to show the primary impact of your research is for the benefit of the DAC list country. So scholarship discussion alone would not count as ODA compliance, however with policy engagement this would mean closer ODA compliance, although it is more indirect.

Is it ok if your PhD research only partially focused on the needs of developing countries, but then your proposed fellowship fully focuses on developing countries?

Yes this is fine.

One of the mandatory attachments is the ODA compliance statement - could you explain more about how many characters this attachment has to be?

This attachment isn't bound by a character limit but cannot exceed one side of A4. It should be submitted in PDF format and be structured by the three questions:

- Which country/ countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?
- How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
- How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

Costs

How much will fellowship holders be paid?

This depends on what you bid for in your proposal. Postdoctoral fellows are usually grade 7 staff but speak to your research office as there will be variations between institutions.

Are the proposals going to be assessed for their value for money? Is there any guidelines to conform to "value for money"?

We expect all costs requested to be fully appropriate and justified, particularly equipment costs and travel and subsistence. Costs should be reasonable and reviewers will assess how appropriate costs are. Please note that under costing is not helpful as you won't be able to achieve what you plan to do, so don't think a cheaper proposal will have better chances. Also as there may be working in other countries, it is important that you are safe so it is fine to cost appropriately.

Is health insurance for travelling abroad something that could be included in the costs?

Yes.

I have an intermediate level of Spanish, is it OK to include language training and related costs while doing the fieldwork?

Yes this would be an acceptable activity and use of costs.

Should the funding amount be based on the proposed budget in the application? Or is there a fixed budget per fellowship?

The maximum amount of funding that can be requested per fellowship is £125,000 (100% full economic cost) however you don't have to apply for the maximum amount. Applicants should apply for costs which are appropriate for undertaking the fellowship.