



Science & Technology
Facilities Council

UK Research
and Innovation

Ernest Rutherford Fellowships Applications Guidance Notes for Reviewers 2019/20

Ernest Rutherford Fellowship Scheme

Ernest Rutherford Fellowships are intended for early career researchers who do not have a permanent academic position. The aim is to support future scientific leaders to establish a strong, independent research programme.

STFC expects to make ten Ernest Rutherford Fellowship awards this year.

Assessment Procedures

STFC seeks comments for each Fellowship application from at least three independent reviewers via the Research Councils' [Joint electronic submission](#) (Je-S) system. These reviews inform the scoring and ranking of proposals carried out by the Fellowship Panel.

The proposal you are asked to review includes a case for support. In some instances the case for support may include a link to a web site containing information on the research proposal. Reviewers are not required to consider this additional information when providing comments on a proposal. If you do choose to look at this information, it is possible that your anonymity to the applicant will be compromised.

DORA

We are committed to support the recommendations and principles set out by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA: <https://sfdora.org/read>).

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.

Assessing Ernest Rutherford Fellowship Applications

In order to ensure that your review is as useful as possible please:

- Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria and the scoring guidance before you begin
- Provide clear comments and recommendations
- Give justification for markings
- Be consistent between box markings and comments
- Provide comprehensive information without being over-long
- Provide constructive criticism
- Clearly identify strengths and weaknesses

- Raise concerns in the form of questions for the applicant
- Use the wording early career rather than young when referring to an applicant.

Scoring of Applications in Je-S

Reviewer Self-Assessment

Conflicts of Interest

Before completing a review please ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest with the application. STFC as a publicly funded organization is accountable to Government and the public for its actions and the way it conducts its business. STFC has a conflicts of interest policy in place to protect both the organization and the individuals involved in providing it with knowledge and advice, and to reduce the risk of impropriety or any perception of impropriety. We request that you make yourself familiar with the policy available at <https://stfc.ukri.org/funding/research-grants/peer-review-and-assessment/> and inform us as soon as possible if you have or suspect any conflicts of interest with the application you have been asked to review.

Level of confidence

After reading through the application, indicate the level of confidence you have in reviewing the application – High, Medium or Low.

Connections with applicant

If you have any connections with the applicant e.g. on collaborations, research talks, knowledge through colleagues etc. please provide details.

Experience of fellowships

If you have experience at your institution of Ernest Rutherford Fellowships or fellowships of a similar level please provide details. Do you know the expected standard of a fellowship and have you been involved working with fellows to have the knowledge of the type of applicant required?

Applicant Rating and Proposal Rating

Applications should be assessed against the following criteria:

- the excellence of the track record of the applicant, including for example the significance of research outputs, their standing in their field and their ability to communicate their science effectively;
- leadership potential of the individual to lead their research discipline for example through agenda setting;
- the capability of the applicant to fulfil the wider responsibilities of an academic career;
- the quality, timeliness, feasibility and novelty of the research proposal;
- alignment with STFC strategic priorities;
- a clearly thought through and project-specific Pathways to Impact Statement.

Reviewers are required to score applications against the first four criteria. It is important reviewers look for evidence in the application when scoring against the criteria. Guidance on scoring applications is included in Annex 1. Applications should be assigned scores against the categories for the applicant and the proposal on the form using a scale of 1 to 6 (**where 6 is high and 1 is low**). A score of 6 is the highest score representing a truly exceptional applicant. Reviewers are asked to use the scale in full and to bear in mind that with ten awards available and 173 proposals, scores of 5 and 6 should be reserved for applicants of the highest quality whom you consider should be short listed for interview (approximately the top 15% of all applicants to a

fellowship scheme). All criteria are equally weighted.

Applicants have indicated on their c.v. if the choice of organization is for personal reasons. Applying to hold a Fellowship at a particular institution because of family constraints or remaining at an institution should not disadvantage a candidate. Please also read the briefing on [unconscious bias](#).

Applicant Rating

Excellence of applicant including achievements to date and current standing

Criteria - excellence of the track record of the applicant, including for example the significance of research outputs, their standing in their field and their ability to communicate their science effectively

Leadership Potential

Criteria - leadership potential of the individual to lead their research discipline for example through agenda setting.

Academic Career Potential

Criteria - the capability of the applicant to fulfil the wider responsibilities of an academic career
The c.v. will demonstrate elements of the applicant's career potential – teaching experience, student supervision, talks given.

Proposal Rating

Quality, timeliness, feasibility and novelty of proposal

Criteria - quality, timeliness, feasibility and novelty of the research proposal.

Any Other Confidential Information

Reviewers should use this box to include any information for the Panel that is confidential. The information is not disclosed to the applicant. Only exceptional information should be entered here.

Overall Assessment Comments

Reviewers should use this box to give their opinion of the candidate in terms of their ability and suitability for a Fellowship using all of the above criteria. Please include justification for the scores given and assess against the top four criteria. Please include comments on the proposal's alignment to STFC's scientific priorities and if the applicant has a clearly thought through and an acceptable Pathways to Impact statement.

It is important to bear in mind that your comments will be fed back anonymously to the applicant, who will then be allowed to respond to factual inaccuracies. Following this, members of the panels will be asked to use your reports as the chief tool for distinguishing between proposals.

Returns

An applicant will have indicated on their proposal if they are returning to research from a career break.

Please check whether applicants have had a career break, worked part-time or whether there have been any other extenuating circumstances. Allowance should be made for potential adverse

impact on their track record. Reviewers should also take account of situations where applicants have been absent from research for a period for any reason – ill-health, disability, maternity, paternity or adoption leave, career breaks – and for whom the number of research outputs is consequently reduced. Applicants who completed the section on Career Breaks on their c.v. are permitted to extend the limit of two pages to accommodate the additional information.

In assessing the effects of career breaks or flexible working, reviewers 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, reviewers will recognise that the effects on productivity of a career break, or a period of flexible working, may continue beyond the return to work.

Examples of areas that may be affected are

- 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
- 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

Deadline for assessments

The completed review form should be submitted no later than **11 November 2019**. If you cannot comment within the indicated timescale, please let us know immediately so we have time to approach an alternative reviewer or perhaps extend the deadline. In addition, please let us know if you do not feel qualified to comment at all. This will help us to ensure that a fair review process is applied to all applications.

Enquiries

Any enquiries on the assessment of STFC Fellowships should be addressed to: Clare Heseltine in STFC's Education, Training and Careers Section (telephone: 01793 442043 or e- mail: fellowships@stfc.ac.uk).

Guidance on scoring applications

(i) Applicant Rating

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| Excellence of Applicant including achievements to date and current standing | 6.0 Exceptional | The applicant is recognised within the wider research community to be of the highest standard. The level of achievements is at the expected exceptional level for the applicant's research experience e.g. they have received prizes, awards, supervised students, held leadership roles in collaborations and have an exceptional number and quality of publications (if applicable). |
| | 5.0 Excellent | The applicant has excellent recognition within their own research community. The level of achievements is at the expected excellent level for the applicant's research experience e.g. they have received prizes, awards, supervised students, held leadership roles in collaborations, have an excellent number and quality of publications (if applicable). |
| | 4.0 Very Good | The applicant has a very good level of recognition within their research community. The level of achievements is at a very good level for the applicant's research experience e.g. they have received some prizes or awards, and been involved in supervising students, holding positions of responsibility in collaborations, have a very good number and quality of publications (if applicable). |
| | 3.0 Good | The applicant has a good level of recognition within their research community as a solid researcher but not the wider community. The level of achievements is at a good level for the applicant's research experience e.g. they have received some prizes or awards, and have had some involvement in supervising students, held minor positions of responsibility in collaborations, have a good number and quality of publications (if applicable). |
| | 2.0 Not Competitive | The applicant has some level of recognition of their potential to become a solid researcher within their own group but not the wider research community. The level of achievements is at an insufficient level for the applicant's research experience e.g. they have not received either significant prizes or awards, and have had no involvement in supervising students or holding positions of responsibility in collaborations, have a low number and low quality of publications (if applicable). |
| | 1.0 Unfundable | The applicant does not have recognition within their own group or the wider research community. The applicant does not reach the required standard for a fellowship and has demonstrated substantial weaknesses. The applicant has not demonstrated any of the expected achievements for an applicant of their research experience e.g. they have not received either prizes or awards, and have had no involvement |

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| | | in supervising students or holding any positions of responsibility in collaborations, have a poor number and poor quality of publications (if applicable). |
| Leadership Potential | 6.0 Exceptional | The applicant already holds prominent leadership positions, working independently of senior colleagues and is on an upward trajectory to become a world-class independent research leader. |
| | 5.0 Excellent | The applicant shows strong leadership potential with some leadership positions and exhibits excellent potential to become a world-class research leader. |
| | 4.0 Very Good | The applicant already shows very good potential leadership qualities both in a research team and within the wider community and exhibits very good potential to become a world-class research leader. |
| | 3.0 Good | The applicant shows some leadership potential but insufficient leadership potential within the wider community. The applicant exhibits some potential to become a world-class research leader. |
| | 2.0 Not Competitive | The applicant shows no evidence of leadership potential within the wider community and exhibits little potential to become a world-class research leader. |
| | 1.0 Unfundable | The applicant shows no evidence of leadership potential within their group or the wider community and exhibits no potential to become a world-class research leader. |
| Academic Career Potential | 6.0 Exceptional | The applicant has exceptionally demonstrated they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has exceptional teaching and student supervision experience. The applicant has given significant talks to the wider community. |
| | 5.0 Excellent | The applicant has clearly demonstrated they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has excellent teaching and student supervision experience The applicant has given numerous talks to the wider community. |
| | 4.0 Very Good | The applicant has demonstrated they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has very good teaching and student supervision experience The applicant has given some talks to the wider community. |
| | 3.0 Good | The applicant has demonstrated to some extent they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has some teaching and student supervision experience The applicant has given few talks to the wider community. |
| | 2.0 Not Competitive | The applicant has shown little demonstration they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has insufficient teaching and student supervision experience The applicant has given insufficient talks to the wider community. |
| | 1.0 Unfundable | The applicant has not demonstrated they are ready to take the next step toward an academic career. The applicant has no teaching and student supervision experience The applicant has given no talks to the wider community. |

(ii) Proposal Rating

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| Quality, timeliness, feasibility and novelty of proposal | 6.0 Exceptional | The proposed work meets exceptional scientific standards in terms of novelty, quality, objectives, and timeliness and addresses extremely important scientific questions. An exceptional , well-thought out plan has been considered to support their research over the duration of the fellowship. The research is highly likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject and would not be completed without the fellowship. You think this research programme should definitely be supported and it would be a loss not to do so. |
| | 5.0 Excellent | The proposal is high quality science, which is of excellent scientific merit in terms of novelty, quality, objectives, and timeliness and addresses highly important scientific questions. An excellent , well-thought out plan has been considered to support their research over the duration of the fellowship. The research is likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research should be supported. |
| | 4.0 Very Good | The proposal is good quality science, which is of very good scientific merit in terms of novelty, quality, objectives, and timeliness and addresses important scientific questions. A very good well-thought out plan has been considered to support their research over the duration of the fellowship. The research is likely to make a good contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research should be supported if funds are available. |
| | 3.0 Good | The proposal is worthy science, which is of some scientific merit and meets satisfactory standards for novelty, quality, objectives, and timeliness and addresses reasonably important scientific questions. A good , well-thought out plan has been considered to support their research over the duration of the fellowship. The research is not likely to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research could be supported if funds are available. |
| | 2.0 Not Competitive | The science lacks novelty, is of low quality , not well thought through objectives and is not timely but could result in some useful knowledge. The research will make a marginal contribution to the understanding of the subject. You think this research should not be supported. |
| | 1.0 Unfundable | Science that is not novel, is of unsatisfactory quality, unrealistic objectives, is not timely and is unlikely to advance the field. A well-thought out plan has not been considered to support their research over the duration of the fellowship. The research is unlikely to contribute to the understanding of the subject. You think this research should not be supported. |