

WELCOME - This session will commence at 1.30pm

Applying for a Postdoctoral Fellowship

Prof. Debbie Riby (NINE DTP Director)

Dr Emma Bowen (Research Innovation Service)



www.ninedtp.ac.uk



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Structure of Session

- Reflecting of skills and career aspirations
- ESRC Funded Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Other Fellowship Opportunities and considerations
- Questions & answers

Skills & Careers

- Towards the end of a PhD ... opportunity for skills reflection (strengths, weaknesses, gaps, priorities, aspirations)
 - *Life and personal choices*
 - *'Fit for the future' approach via training*
- Various routes (even within academic trajectory)
 - *e.g. working on an existing grant as a PDRA? Fixed term contracts for teaching? Lectureships? Independent research opportunities – fellowships...*



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ESRC POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME

ESRC PDF scheme



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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ESRC HAVE NOT YET LAUNCHED THE
COMPETITION FOR 2021 – THEREFORE THIS IS GENERIC
INFORMATION READY FOR THE LAUNCH

**VISIT OUR NINE DTP WEBSITE TO KEEP UP TO DATE
WHEN LAUNCHED:**

<https://www.ninedtp.ac.uk/postdoctoral-fellowship-scheme/>

ESRC Fellowship Scheme



Aimed at those in the immediately postdoctoral stage of their career, to provide the opportunity to consolidate their PhD through developing publications, their networks, and their research and professional skills

- Length of fellowship is up to 12 months (or 24 months part time)
- NINE DTP is given an annual quota of awards
 - *Particularly interested in those aligned to Industrial Strategy / Data Science*
- Call will go out in November – Expression of Interest stage January – full application March (*usual timing for the call*)
- **Max 2 applications per department** (selected at Expression of Interest stage)
- All DTPs provide the Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme
 - *We select the Fellows and the ESRC directly funds these*

ESRC Fellowship Scheme



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- Applicants must either have been awarded a PhD or have submitted the thesis and passed viva with minor corrections, with the expectation that the PhD will be awarded **by the fellowship start date (1st October annually)**
 - *Dates and timings will be updated for the new round on the ESRC guidelines at the time of launch*
- No more than 12 months postdoctoral research experience at application point
- Within Fellowship 75% must be consolidation of PhD work and no more than 25% is new work / research
- Make an impact – expects fellows to have identified the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice, and actively consider how these can be maximised and developed
- Be innovative

Importance of understanding the scheme

Example activities



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Minimal new research

Maximise outputs

Make an impact

- Produce publications in order to help establish track record
- Engage with a range of different audiences to communicate research findings
- Build networks to develop impact opportunities and inform and support further
- Undertake an internship or placement to help develop understanding of users' organisations, provided they are relevant to the research
- Further training to improve research skills
- Developing future funding proposals
- Carry out further limited research (up to 25% of fellowship time)
- Teaching, if this is aligned with the wider purposes of the fellowship such as research development only (up to a maximum of six hours per week)
- Research visits to internationally leading research organisations – either in the UK or abroad – for the purposes of research collaboration, training, and/or access to data or other resources not available at your host organisation (justification needed)

Not an exhaustive list Make your application INDIVIDUAL TO YOU !!

Awards so far

- NINE DTP data – 3 rounds of Fellowships

	Total Postdoctoral Fellows at NINE DTP
Durham	7
Newcastle	7
QUB	5
Ulster	0
Northumbria	0
Teesside	0
Sunderland	0



*Dr Sarah Hughes ESRC postdoctoral Fellow
2018-2019
Geography - Durham*



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Tips for ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Applications

Start early

- The application is long and requires input from many others before you submit (reference letters, mentor CV, finance checks etc)

Ask colleagues to read your application as early as possible.

- Make sure that people who do not know your subject area read it.
- Ask friends who are not academics to read it.

Emphasize career development - show what you have done and how this will help you continue your career trajectory.

Show the importance of your research. At the end of the PhD process we've often become very niche, step back from that and think about the wider implications of your work. Link this to impact, and make sure this is feasible and realistic.



*Dr Sarah Hughes ESRC postdoctoral Fellow
2018-2019
Geography - Durham*



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Tips for ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Applications

Make sure the reader is clear on **WHY** this postdoc, **WHY** now, **WHY** are you the best person to be doing this work and **HOW** this will impact your future career.

After listing a planned or existing publication, summarize it in a sentence. Emphasize its contribution to debates.

- Link planned publications to previous conference presentations, or PhD chapters. Show that you can do this.

When discussing previous **impact**, make your own contribution clear.

- How did you/your work make a change?
- How was this evidenced and what will you do in the future?

Make sure that the fit with the **mentor** is strong.

- Evidence this – make sure that your mentor details this fit in their statement as you don't have space to.

THINK ABOUT
WHO WILL BE
YOUR MENTOR

Guidance from the Panel

- Read the guidelines and see the general ESRC guidance <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/postdoctoral-fellowships/>

My tips:

- Ensure the impact makes sense ...
- Is it feasible? (practicalities / logistics)
- Clear time planning ...
- Have you tailored the app to **YOU** – your skills, your gaps in expertise, the impact relevant to your PhD / research?
- Is everything justified?
- Have you made a good choice of mentor?

Why you need to start early...

Documents required if supported by the department:

- CV (max two sides of A4)
- Case for support (max six sides of A4)
- Application form (several sections e.g. beneficiaries etc / lay summary)
- Work Plan (max two sides of A4)
- Justification of resources (max two sides of A4)
- List of publications / bibliography for CfS
- Head of Department statement (max one side of A4)
- Mentor statement & summary CV (max two sides of A4)
- Referee statement (max one side of A4)
- Any additional letters of support (e.g. invitations)



Making an application

- **First stage** – expression of interest to department
- **Second stage** - each department is able to support 2 applications through to the panel
- Especially keen to support applications aligned to the Industrial Strategy and Advanced Quantitative Methods (previously a steer)
- ***Deadlines to follow***

OTHER TYPES OF FELLOWSHIPS

Post-doctoral/ECR Fellowships in Social Sciences – what are they for?

- In general ECR Fellowships are an opportunity for those without a permanent academic position to undertake an independent, new research project
- A springboard to **research independence** - to pursue your own research interests and move away from your PhD supervisor's influence with **new research**
- They focus on **career development**, so the research project itself is the vehicle by which you can gain experience – they are a personal award based on you! Not a standard research project application

Where to find them....



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- The main Social Science/Humanities Fellowships in the UK:
 - British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellowship (within 3 yrs from viva)**
 - Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship (within 4 yrs of PhD submission)**
 - Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship (not have held permanent position)**
 - UKRI Future Leader Fellowship (self-identifying as ECR)**
- Disciplinary Specific – learned Societies
- Institutional – Universities offer their own Fellowships

Current Schemes and WHAT THEY ARE FOR

LEVERHULME
TRUST

Early Career Fellowship

Career development opportunities for researchers with a proven record of research. **The Fellowships are intended to assist those at a relatively early stage of their academic careers, and it is hoped that the appointment would lead to a more permanent position for the individual,** either within the same or another institution.

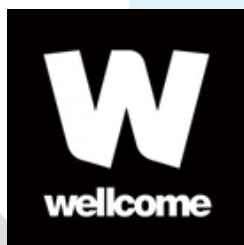
The objective is for Fellows to undertake a significant piece of publishable research during the tenure of the award, and the project put forward should therefore not be a reworking or mere extension of the candidate's doctoral research project.



Postdoctoral Fellowship

Offers outstanding early career researchers the opportunity to strengthen their experience of research and teaching in an academic environment. **This scheme aims to help develop the award holder's curriculum vitae and boost their prospects of obtaining a permanent academic post.** The primary emphasis is on the completion of a significant piece of publishable research, and the integration of the award holder into the community of established scholars within their field.

Schemes *under review* and WHAT THEY ARE FOR



**Research
Fellowships in
Humanities and
Social Science**

For postdoctoral researchers without a permanent contract to carry out an extended period of research on your own project. WT consider applications from researchers in the early stages of their careers as well as more established researchers (the suitability of previous research contributions will be assessed according to your career stage and experience)



**UK Research
and Innovation**

**Future
Leader
Fellowship**

FLFs support talented people and allow universities to develop their most talented early career researchers and innovators or to attract new people to their organisations, including from overseas. Offer funding to tackle ambitious and challenging research and innovation and to develop Fellow's career. **The aim of the scheme is to develop the next wave of world-class research and innovation leaders in academia and business.**

Assessment Criteria



Postdoctoral
Fellowship



Research
Fellowships in
Humanities and
Social Science

Assessors evaluate each proposal based on **academic merit**:

- originality
- its relationship to, and the volume of, research already in the field,
- the scholarly importance of the research proposed,
- the suitability of the methodology,
- the feasibility of the research programme
- the specificity of the scheme of research and the intended outcomes

Assessors will also evaluate the **ability of the applicant** to undertake the proposed research, taking into account their track record in terms of publication, their academic age and stage of career.

- the **significance and originality** of your proposed research
- the suitability and relevance of your approach to your research topic
- your **previous research contributions** eg publications, conference papers, public engagement and policy-related work
- the **suitability of the host organisation** for your research and for developing your independent career.

Assessment Criteria

LEVERHULME
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Early Career
Fellowship

- **Originality** – the research achieves more than the incremental development of a single discipline
- **Importance** – the work will enable further research or enquiry
- **Significance** – the proposed research has relevance outside a single field, and is able to excite those working in other disciplines
- Merit – the **quality of the research design and methodology**, and the **suitability of the researchers and institution** for the realisation of the proposed research objectives

Particularly welcome applications that:

- **reflect an individual's personal vision, aspiration, or intellectual curiosity**
- take appropriate risks in setting and pursuing research objectives
- enable a refreshing departure from established patterns of working – either for the individual, or for the discipline
- transcend disciplinary boundaries

So before you embark upon an application, you need think about

- Why You?
- Why the Research?
- Why the Host Institution?

....because this is what the funders will want to know about

Some common features of ECR Fellowships

- Require you to have a formal **Mentor** so you need to be at a stage where you're ready and confident to start talking about your research to others – identify who in your field you would like to work with and explore options with them
- You will need a plan for your **Career Development** and be able to articulate how the Fellowship is going to support you in your **career trajectory**
- You need to be able to demonstrate **awareness of the 'bigger picture'** – put your research into a slightly wider context than the immediate topic area
- **Mobility** – being mobile within your academic career is regarded by many funders as important in developing yourself so if you plan to stay in one place, you may be asked to say why

Being application-ready!

(All the obvious things)



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- Most Fellowship schemes are offered in either 1 or 2 rounds annually and on a regular cycle, so **be prepared with dates well in advance!** Not ideal just to see a call opening and respond, better if you can plan ahead and prepare.
- **Some schemes do not allow repeated applications** so ensure you are happy that you are giving it your best shot
- **Research the funder and scheme** – check out what has been funded in the past, look up the award-holders.
- Ensure you are **adapting your plans to align with the key drivers of the funder** and aims of the scheme
- **Identify any skills/experience gaps in your CV** and spend time addressing these
- It's not just about meeting the eligibility criteria for the scheme and having a project idea, you have to really think about what they are looking for and **make yourself competitive**
- **Give yourself time** and access the research support mechanisms from your chosen host university. Be aware that there may be Departmental selection processes to go through first



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