

Discovery Fellowship Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs

Can I use the DF to continue research started as part of my PhD / postdoc?

The DF can build on aspects of your PhD / postdoc research, but you will need to demonstrate that you have developed the proposed DF research yourself, that you have sole ownership of the project and that the proposed research is independent from any projects being conducted or planned by your previous Group Leaders. You need to be able to demonstrate that the research proposed will help you establish your own “research niche”.

Can I carry out a DF at my current Research Organisation?

Yes, you can carry out a DF at your current Research Organisation, there is no requirement to move. However, you need to demonstrate the independence of your proposed research from that of your current Group Leader and fully justify why the host Research Organisation proposed is the best place for you to be to carry out your research and develop your career.

Can I carry out a DF at an overseas Research Organisation?

Periods of research can be conducted at overseas Research Organisations, but the host organisation that employs the fellow and holds the DF award must be based in the UK. Any period of research away from the primary host must be fully justified and supported by letters from the proposed host Group Leaders at any secondary organisations.

Can non-UK citizens apply for a DF?

Yes, BBSRC’s fellowship competitions are open to overseas candidates but the fellowship must be hosted by a UK university or BBSRC-sponsored institute. All successful applicants who require a visa to work in the UK will be eligible to be considered under the Global Talent route. This replaces the previous Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route.

Information for Economic Area Applicants - EU applicants should refer to guidance on the UKRI website regarding the effects of EU exit <https://www.ukri.org/our-work/collaborating-internationally/get-funding-and-visas-to-do-research-in-the-uk/>.

I hold, or have previously held, a lecturer level (or equivalent) post. Can I apply for a DF?

No, as detailed in the BBSRC Fellowships Handbook, applicants must not hold, or have held, an academic position at lecturer level (or the equivalent in institutions other than universities), nor should they have had an offer of such an appointment prior to the commencement of a fellowship, if awarded. This is irrespective of whether the lecturer level position is based on a fixed-term or an open-ended contract. Full eligibility details can be found in the Fellowships Handbook, including guidance on eligibility for applicants who have previously held or

currently hold a fellowship. **Please note that if applicants have previously applied for BBSRC grant funding as a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator (therefore confirming that they hold a lecturer level or equivalent post) they are not eligible to apply for a BBSRC fellowship.**

Can I apply for other fellowship and grant awards at the same time as applying for a DF?

The BBSRC allows applicants to apply to other organisations (with the same or a different project) whilst applying for BBSRC fellowship funding. However, you should check with other Research Councils/organisations for their rules on applications to other organisations. Your proposed project should be primarily focused on the remit of each organisation you are applying to; it is not permissible to submit an application with the same project to two different Research Councils.

Note: Discovery Fellowship applicants are not eligible to apply to any additional 2020 BBSRC fellowship competitions. Additionally, applicants for a BBSRC Discovery Fellowship are not permitted to apply to the UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship call in the same calendar year.

If I have a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship application in progress can I still apply for a DF?

This depends on which UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) call you applied to. If your FLF application was submitted in the year preceding the DF proposal deadline then yes, you may apply for a DF. However, you must inform BBSRC immediately should you be awarded a UKFI FLF as your DF proposal will need to be withdrawn from the round. Please contact BBSRC Office if you are still unsure if you are eligible to apply.

What level of support should my host Research Organisation provide?

Host Research Organisations can demonstrate support for a Fellow in a range of ways including, but not limited to; additional funding for research expenses / equipment / consumables, reduced cost access to core facilities, support for the fellow to access training courses and events.

Can I use the DF to purchase equipment?

No, the DF award cannot be used to purchase equipment, this includes cameras, laptops, PCs and supporting equipment. It is expected that equipment required for the proposed project be available to you as part of the host Research Organisation's demonstration of support for the fellowship.

Can the duration of the DF applied for be less than three years?

No, DF proposals must be for three years and be costed as such. However, awards can be undertaken on a part-time basis if appropriate, the BBSRC Fellowships Handbook download contains further details. Once undertaking the fellowship, it is expected that many fellows will move on to more senior positions or take up more advanced fellowships prior to the completion of their DF.

What should my Career Development Plan include?

The Career Development Plan should be used to identify your training needs and how you will use the support provided by the DF to address them. For applicants not experienced in developing a Career Development Plan, BBSRC recommends you consult with your Research Organisation's Staff Development group prior to submission of your proposal.

COVID-19 Guidance

Future challenges surrounding COVID-19

UKRI acknowledges that it is a challenge for applicants to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 while the pandemic continues to evolve. Applications should be based on the information available at the point of submission and, if applicable, the known application specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for. Where known impacts have occurred, these should be highlighted in the application, including the assumptions/information at the point of submission. There is no need to include contingency plans for the potential impacts of COVID-19. Requests for travel both domestically and internationally can be included in accordance to the relevant scheme guidelines, noting the above advice.

Reviewers will receive instructions to assume that changes that arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, post-submission, will be resolved and complications related to COVID-19 should not affect their scores.

Where an application is successful, any changes in circumstances that affect the proposal will be managed as a post-award issue

“I have had major interruptions or disruptions to my career”

UKRI recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities and are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career(s) such as breaks and delays, disruptive working patterns and conditions, the loss of on-going work, and role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic.

Reviewers and panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts of the impact that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the track record and career development of those individuals included in the proposal and will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing. Where disruptions have occurred applicants can highlight this within their application, if they wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

Contact

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