



Academic Careers: Postdoctoral Fellowships

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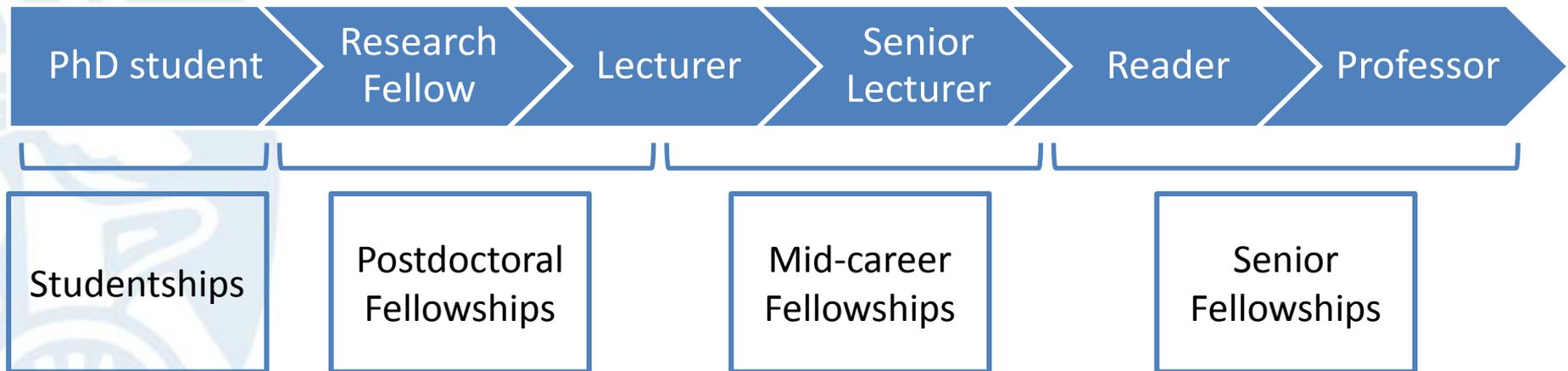
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Overview

- The academic career path & examples of fellowships available
- How to find fellowship opportunities & what to look for
- The application process
- Tips for planning and writing a fellowship application
- Tips for fellowship interviews

The academic career path for non-clinical applicants



Examples of postdoctoral fellowships



Wellcome Trust Sir Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral Fellowship (1 year)

British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (3 years)

NIHR Postdoctoral Fellowship (3 years)

ESRC Future Research Leader* (4 years)

MRC Early Career Fellowship in Economics of Health (4 years)

MRC Population Health Scientist Fellowship (4 years)

MRC Career Development Award in Biostatistics (4 years)

MRC Special Training Fellowship in Biomedical Informatics (4 years)

Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship* (5 years)

EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship (no limit)

Wellcome Trust Society and Ethics Research Fellowship (no limit)

Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Research Fellowship (no limit)

(*these fellowships require a contribution towards the fellow's salary from the HI)

Examples of mid-career fellowships



MRC Career Development Award (3-6 years)

NIHR Career Development Fellowship (7 years)

ERC Starting Grant (2-7 years)

Wellcome Trust Sir Henry Dale Postdoctoral Fellowship (7 years)

MRC Methodology Research Fellowship (4-8 years)

MRC New Investigator Research Grant (3-10 years)*

British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (15 years)

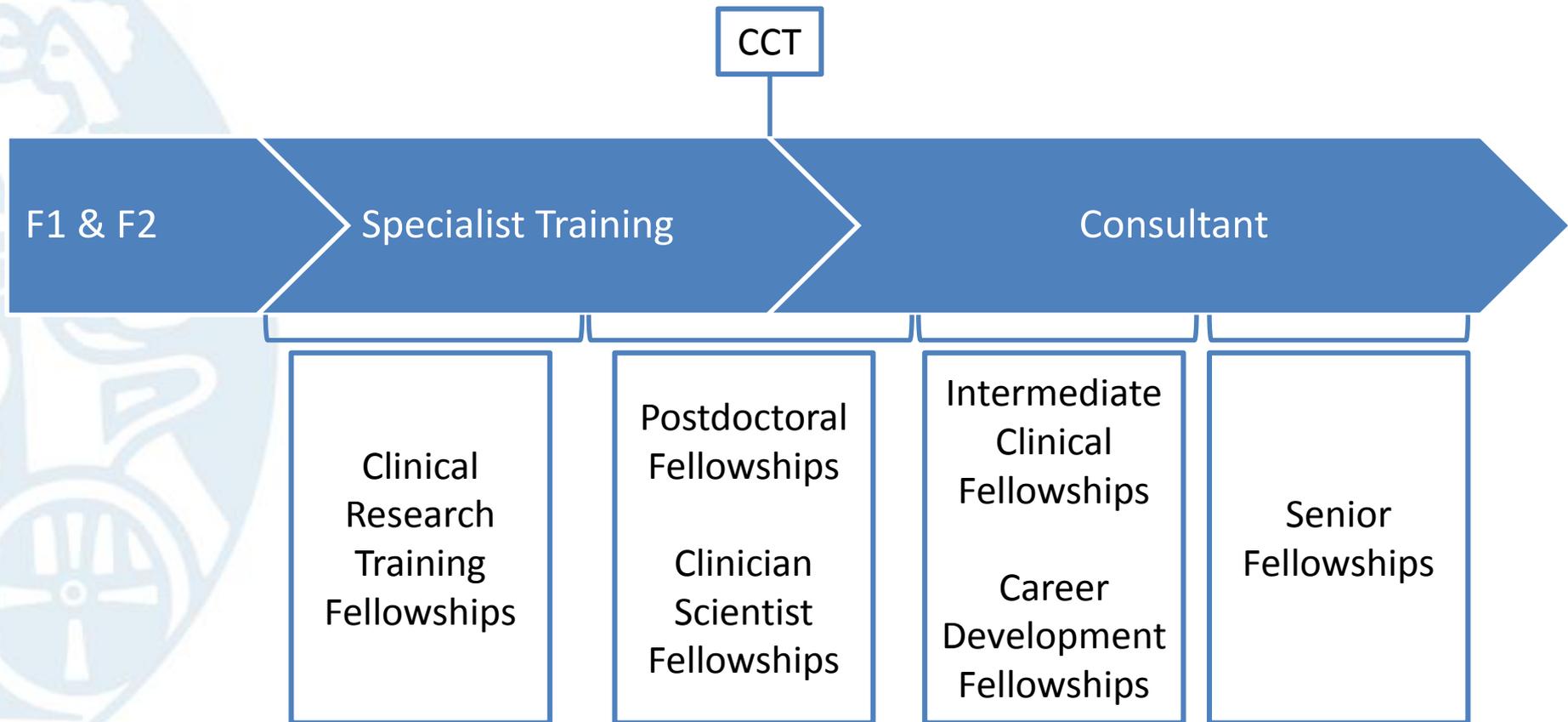
EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship (no limit)

Wellcome Trust Society and Ethics Research Fellowship (no limit)

Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Research Fellowship (no limit)

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The academic career path for clinical applicants



Examples of clinical fellowships

Wellcome Trust Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowship for Clinicians (NTN, 2 years from PhD)

Wellcome Trust Intermediate Clinical Fellowship (NTN / CCT, PhD)

MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowship (NTN / CCT, PhD)

NIHR Clinician Scientist Award (NTN / CCT, PhD)

How to find fellowship opportunities

- Funding agency websites
- Sign up for email alerts from funding agencies, societies etc
- Talk to your supervisor, other senior academics and current fellows
- Ask your research office for advice

What to look for in fellowship opportunities

- Eligibility for the scheme and the cut off point (time since PhD viva)
- Eligibility of your host institution to hold the fellowship
- Remit of the funder and scheme
- If additional funding is required from your host institution
- Mobility requirements
- Funding level and eligible costs
- Duration of funding
- If you are allowed to do fieldwork
- Any specific rules for those who haven't finished their PhD
- Rules about other commitments (teaching, other projects)
- If you can apply to other funders at the same time
- The application process and timing

The application process

- Planning
 - Writing your proposal
 - Completion of the application form (usually online)
 - Submission of application
 - International peer review
 - Funding Committee / Interview Panel
 - Decisions and feedback
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- The entire process from submission to decision takes ~ 6 months
 - Some schemes have several application stages (outline or preliminary applications and interviews)

Things to consider



- Person, Project & Place
- The focus is on the individual
- Carefully consider when would be the best time for you to apply
- Check who has been awarded the fellowship before
- Check who sits on the interview panel
- Make sure that you are eligible to apply
- Check that your project is within the remit of the funder and scheme
- Your choice of host institution is important
- It is important to have the right supervisors, mentors and collaborators
- There is a big focus on training
- The application must be written by the applicant
- Most schemes have one deadline per year
- Resubmissions are often limited or not allowed
- Fellowship applications need careful planning and shouldn't be rushed

Eligibility

- Check the rules carefully
- Most schemes start counting from the date of your viva
- You can apply for some before you have completed your PhD
- All funders take into account career breaks for maternity leave
- Some funders make allowances for part time working
- You must show evidence of a commitment to a research career
- You must be able to demonstrate a good track record

Planning

- Check the deadline and make sure that you have enough time
- Complete any internal university procedures
- Find out about the strategic objectives of the funding agency and make sure your proposal is compatible
- Read the guidelines carefully
- Talk to the funder
- Register for an account for online submission systems
- Check whether you need a letter of support from your host institution
- Look at examples of previous successful applications
- Talk to people who currently hold the fellowship
- Talk to members of the committee/board/panel
- Talk to your supervisor, senior colleagues & research coordinator

Writing your proposal



- Read and adhere to the guidelines
- Tailor your application for the funder and scheme
- Explicitly state your objectives and hypotheses
- Highlight what's unique and novel about your proposal
- Include preliminary / pilot data
- Provide methodological detail
- Include sample size calculations
- Acknowledge any challenges or limitations
- Provide a full justification for your budget
- Get your application reviewed by senior colleagues
- Make your proposal clear and concise
- Structure your proposal in a logical order
- Make sure your application is formatted correctly
- Check for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors

Selling yourself

- Fellowship applications usually include a personal statement section
- This is your opportunity to sell yourself
- Explain why this is the right time for you to apply for this fellowship
- Discuss your career path and track record
- Explain why you are a good candidate and provide evidence to support this
- Include information about your future plans beyond the fellowship
- Explain how you and your career would benefit from the fellowship
- Include an explanation of any career breaks

What happens next

- Your application will be checked by the funder to make sure that it is complete and within remit
- Most applications are subject to international peer review by
 - External referees
 - Committee / Panel members
- Applications are usually judged on:
 - Track record and potential of the applicant
 - Scientific impact of the project and suitability for a fellowship
 - Suitability of the host environment for the applicant's development
 - Value for money
- Most fellowship applications involve an interview

Fellowship interviews



- Most fellowships require an interview
- Usually last ~ 30 minutes
- Large panels ~15+ people
- Mainly questioned by two members of the panel
- Some panels include lay members
- Often have the opportunity to give a short presentation
- Questions on
 - Your background and future plans
 - The research project
 - Your training plans
 - Other aspects e.g. patient and public engagement
 - Reviewers' comments
- Give concise answers as timing is very important
- Try to arrange a mock interview

Questions

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