

Applying for your own grants: why, how and where?

Anne Lingford-Hughes

Professor of Addiction Biology,

Head, Centre for Psychiatry, Imperial College, London

Consultant Addiction Psychiatrist,

CNWL NHS Foundation Trust



The research grant application process.



- Becoming a researcher is an apprenticeship
- Identify good supervisors, mentors, teams etc

What kind of funding?

Fellowship

Personal award

or

Grant

Team

Fellowships:

primarily for PhD, but are some for other career stages

- MRC
- Wellcome
- NIHR
- Charities
- Know the scheme(s)
- Tailor your application to fit their profile and guidance
 - Strategy documents
- ‘Is yours’ & not your supervisors ‘rehashed’ project grant – ‘I’ not ‘we’
- Competitive
- Set up alerts

UKRI, MRC etc

The screenshot shows the Medical Research Council (MRC) website. The header includes the MRC logo and the tagline 'Leading science for better health'. A navigation menu lists 'HOME', 'FUNDING', 'RESEARCH', 'OUR SUCCESSES', 'INNOVATION', 'SKILLS & CAREERS', 'NEWS', 'PUBLICATIONS', and 'ABOUT US'. The 'SKILLS & CAREERS' section is highlighted, and a large red banner for the 'Fellowship Handbook for Applicants' is prominently displayed. Below the banner, there is a sidebar with 'How MRC supports research careers' and 'Explore career and funding options', and a main content area titled 'Fellowships' with a sub-header 'How MRC supports research careers'. The text describes the MRC's role in training researchers and supporting excellent individuals.

Wellcome

The screenshot shows the Wellcome website. The header includes the Wellcome logo and navigation links for 'Grant funding', 'What we do', 'Who we are', 'News and reports', and 'Search Q'. The main content area features a large image of a man sitting on a chair in a room with a stove and a bucket. Overlaid on the image is a white box with the headline 'Science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone'. Below the headline, the text reads: 'Wellcome is a global charitable foundation. We want everyone to benefit from science's potential to improve health and save lives. Find out more about who we are'. There are also links for 'Our mission' and 'Find funding opportunities'.

UKRI, Future Leaders Fellowship

The screenshot shows the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) website. The header includes the UKRI logo and the tagline 'UK Research and Innovation'. A navigation menu lists 'Apply for funding', 'Our work', 'News and views', 'About us', and 'Our councils'. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a large green banner with the text 'Our main funds' and 'Developing people and skills'. Below the banner, there is a section titled 'Future Leaders Fellowships' with a sub-header 'What are Future Leaders Fellowships' and a link to 'Future Leaders Fellowships guidance'. There are also images of a person working in a lab and a person looking at a map.

NIHR

The screenshot shows the NIHR National Institute for Health Research website. The header includes the NIHR logo and the tagline 'National Institute for Health Research'. A navigation menu lists 'Health and Care Professionals', 'Researchers', 'Patients, Carers and the Public', 'Partners and Industry', and 'About us'. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a large image of two people in a lab. Overlaid on the image is a white box with the headline 'NIHR Fellowship Programme'. Below the headline, there are links for 'Home', 'Fellowship Types', 'Fellowship Programmes', and 'Fellowship Programme'. There is also a 'Quick Links' button.

Some organisations have fellowships co-funded with other organisations eg charities etc

NIHR Pre-Doctoral Fellowships are designed to support people who are looking to start or advance a career in health research methodology, specifically in one of the following areas:

- medical statistics
- health economics
- clinical trial design
- operational research
- modelling
- bioinformatics
- qualitative research
- mixed methods
- epidemiology

Applicants without a Masters degree should use the Fellowship to undertake a Masters degree in one of the areas listed. Those already holding a relevant masters degree (or currently completing one) should use the Fellowship to gain additional support and training to advance to the next level of their career. The Fellowship can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis.

Are you eligible?

To be eligible for a NIHR Pre-Doctoral Fellowship you must:

- have completed a relevant first degree.
- have a proposed host who is an HEI, NHS body, or other provider of health and/or care services
- be proposing to develop a career as a methodologist in one of the areas listed above.

Applications open annually in late January/February to start from September the same year to March the following year. Exact dates are available close to the time of opening.

Doctoral Fellowship

The NIHR Doctoral Fellowship is a three year full-time award that supports individuals to undertake a PhD in an area of NIHR research. This fellowship may also be taken up on a part-time basis of between 50% and 100% whole time equivalent (WTE).

Clinical applicants are able to include up to 20% clinical time as part of the fellowship, to ensure the maintenance of their clinical competence whilst undertaking the fellowship.

Are you eligible?

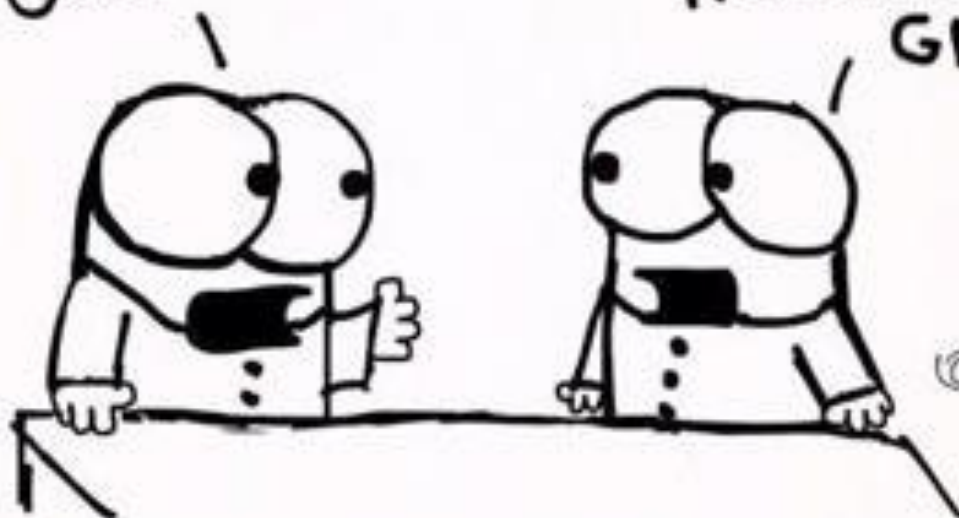
To be eligible for an NIHR Doctoral Fellowship you must:

- Have completed any relevant pre-registration training (for clinical academic applicants)
- Have completed a first degree (for non-clinical applicants)
- Have a proposed host who is an HEI, NHS body, or other provider of health and/or care services.
- Be intending to register for and complete a PhD
- Where already registered for a PhD (or MPhil with transfer to PhD), you should not have been registered for more than 12 months at 100% WTE by the time the award starts.

[Full details of the latest funding rounds are available in funding opportunities.](#)

I ASKED
SANTA
FOR A
RESEARCH
GRANT.

YOU STILL
BELIEVE IN
RESEARCH
GRANTS?



© THE
UPTURNED
MICROSCOPE

Search...

NIHR Incubator for Mental Health Research

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The life-changing work that mental health professionals do every day is underpinned by is impacting on people's lives - academics in mental health are desperately needed to be the population. The people who can provide the insights to promote good mental health varied walks of life. They will bring perspectives and experience from a range of discipl

The NIHR Incubator for Mental Health Research has been created to increase capacity and support a wide-range of professionals, by showcasing mental health research and working to develop new opportunities for those interested in mental health research.

For more information about the incubator please visit the [Mental Health Research web](#) Follow the NIHR Incubator for Mental Health Research on Twitter [@MHRIncubator](#)



Welcome to the incubator for mental health research

We support ambitious mental health professionals who are exploring opportunities in research. Whether you are a clinician or an economist, a data scientist or a therapist, you have a lot you can bring to mental health research. You may be based in primary care, social care, applied health or public health settings. This website guides you through your options in research, sign-posting mentoring, internships, funding and training opportunities - for people at every career stage.

Newsletter sign-up

Tips, funding and training opportunities straight to your inbox

Sign up now

Start research in your current role

GET STARTED →

Find out about funding for research

GET FUNDING ADVICE →

Expand your horizons

COLLABORATE →

Are you ready to GROW?

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/mental-health-incubator/25453>

<https://mentalhealthresearch.org.uk/>

Area of investment and support

Mental health research

MRC supports world-class mental health research, creating new opportunities to treat and prevent mental health illness, such as anxiety and depression, which are estimated to affect around one in six people at any time in the UK.

Budget: MRC has invested more than £140 million over the last five years in research directly addressing mental health questions

Partners involved: Medical Research Council (MRC)

The scope and what we're doing

Why we're doing it



3.2.5 Mental health

Context

Mental health problems pose a major societal challenge, with depression the leading cause of disability worldwide. In the UK, poor mental health costs the economy £70-100 billion per year. Three-quarters of mental disorders first emerge during childhood and adolescence and an estimated one in six adults is affected by mental illness each year. People with serious mental illness have significantly lower life expectancy. Furthermore, addiction and substance abuse have devastating effects on lives and communities, with young people particularly vulnerable. Despite the burden of disease and unmet clinical need, drug development in neuroscience and mental health has declined in the last decade and there have been no new effective types of treatment for over 30 years.

Mental health and illness stem from a complex interplay of biological, psychological, social and environmental factors that influence risk and resilience to illness and response to treatment. A multidisciplinary approach to mental health research is therefore needed.

Long-term ambitions

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the major biological, social and environmental risk factors for mental health disorders, placing a particular emphasis on neurodevelopment and the transition from childhood through adolescence into adult life. Employ a holistic approach across the brain-mind-body interface, characterising interrelationships between the immune system, metabolism and physical conditions co-morbid with mental health disorders
- Develop new ways to detect and measure mental health disorders, incorporating novel technologies to enable evaluation in a home environment
- Develop effective early interventions for child and adolescent mental health disorders

- Strengthen the prevention of mental health disorders that start in childhood and adolescence by incorporating whole-system approaches
- Establish a national infrastructure for mental health research, consolidating existing investment into a comprehensive data platform embedded within existing informatics infrastructure. This will foster multidisciplinary across psychiatry, psychology, neurology, cognitive and developmental neuroscience, bioinformatics, genetics, immunology, social sciences and population health sciences
- Advance mechanistic understanding by exploiting recent developments in psychiatric genetics, immunopsychiatry and cognitive neuroscience. This will identify new drug targets that we will de-risk through new industry partnerships involving experimental medicine and early-phase clinical studies delivered by a precision mental health platform
- Support research and partnerships that will develop digital technology solutions for mental health, such as low-cost wearables, smartphones and virtual and augmented reality, to diagnose, monitor and treat mental health problems
- Scope a major new UK flagship investment in mental health research that will build on current investment to provide international leadership.

Near-term actions

- Building on Mental Health Data Pathfinder awards and working across mental health and health data-science research communities, work towards establishment of a mental health research platform in partnership with other funders, the NHS and industry partners
- Work with ESRC, AHRC and government departments to strengthen multidisciplinary research into adolescent mental health.

<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MRC-250920-DeliveryPlan2019.pdf>

Our Research Programmes

Find out more about our research programmes and how to apply.



Brighter Futures

Our major new programme to tackle mental health conditions where they begin – in young people.



Fellows Award

The Fellows Award supports the best and brightest early career scientists and clinicians as they establish their independence.



Mental Health Data Science

We want to answer the big questions in mental illness. To learn how different conditions start, how they develop and why some people get better when others don't.



PsyImpact

We believe everyone should have access to a mental health treatment that works for them. That's why we're working to get more people the right treatment, faster.



Thriving in a Post Pandemic World

In 2020 MQ responded to the rapidly growing COVID crisis by investing in research that would help society to thrive post pandemic.

BMA Foundation

Each year we award over £900,000 in grants to encourage and further medical research

Donate



Research funding

BMA Foundation

The BMA Foundation awards funds to encourage and further medical research. Find out more about the foundation.

Applying for funding

Find out how to apply for funding from the BMA Foundation. The 2022 application window is now closed.

Grant categories

See all our categories, read the terms and conditions and get more details of the 2022 grants.

Winners 2021

BMA Foundation Awards Ceremony 2018

BMA MEDFASH prize

BMA Foundation

Doris Hillier grant for research into rheumatism and arthritis	+
H C Roscoe grant for research into viral diseases of the respiratory system	+
Helen H Lawson grant for research into end of life decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic	+
J Moulton grant to assist research into long-COVID	+
J Moulton grant to assist research into stroke	+
The James Trust grant for research into asthma	+
Josephine Lansdell grant for research into heart disease	+
Kathleen Harper grant for research into COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy	+
Margaret Temple grant for research into schizophrenia	+
Philip Baker grant for research into Ménière's disease	+
Scholarship grant to promote research into the mental health of medical students	+
Vera Down grant for research into neurological disorders	+
Wesleyan Grant to assist research into the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of practising UK healthcare professionals, and potential impact on future healthcare	+
BMA Foundation	+

Welcome to the future of funding intelligence!



What we do

RDinfo is a research funding database. We compile grants, charities and institutional data to make it easy for you to access the money you need. RDinfo brings both sides of the research world together.

Currently we have online:

1570 grants

that total

£885,261,261.00

from

1712 charities from 36 countries

Currently we have registered:

324 institutions from 23 countries

and

11974 users from 120 countries

RDinfo is committed to open, ethical and transparent access of research funding information across the research community.



RDINFO Upgrade

RDinfo will be re-activating the mail services on 1st April 2015 with the help of www.rebootonline.com following some extensive re-development. We hope this will benefit our users. We have also set the Bronze level to the same privileges as the Silver subscription for a 3 month trial period

How it works

Search



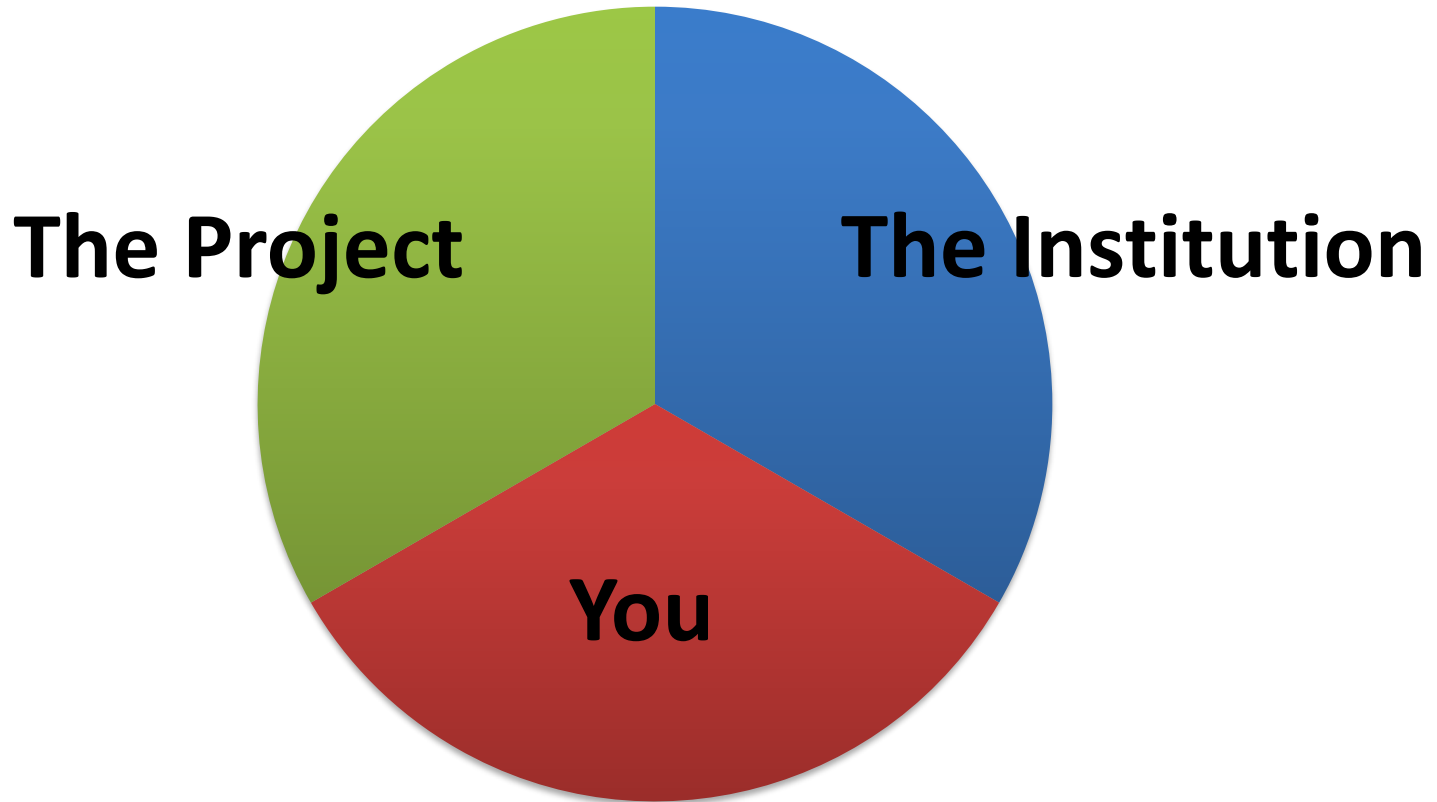
If you are looking for funding RDinfo allows you to

Submissions



If you are a Charity or Institution you can submit your own

Writing a competitive application for a fellowship



Much of the following will also apply to writing a competitive grant application

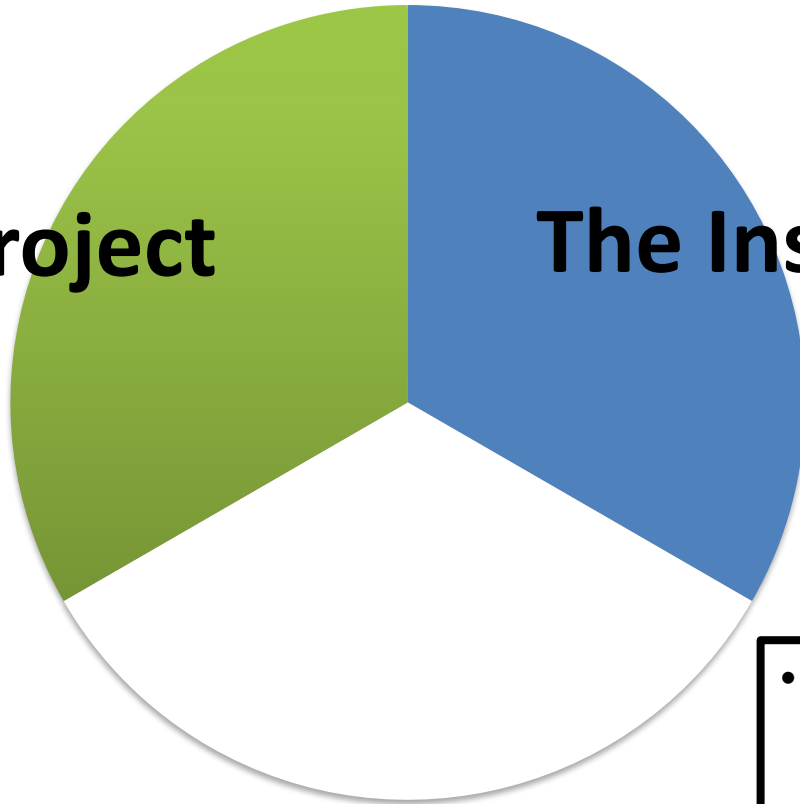
The Project



- The scientific merit of the project will be assessed in terms of its originality and the importance of the scientific questions addressed.
- The overall approach will be assessed, including the appropriateness of the proposed methodology, risks and alternative strategies, the requested resources and feasibility of the timescale.
- NB – many of the panel/reviewers may not be experts in the field so clearly stating why this project is important to fund is **crucial**.
- **The project should be appropriately ambitious and offer suitable career development opportunities for the level of fellowship.**

The Project

The Institution



- What opportunities for your career development are they offering?
- Mentor
 - Different institution
- Letter(s) of support/collaborators
 - Eg access to database



Early-career: Consolidation and exploration: applicants should have delivered previous research projects and have evidence of outputs. They should have plans for a coherent and integrated training programme.

Transition to independence: applicants should have the potential to become independent researchers by having clear research plans that are distinct from their current group / leader and citing outputs from their research experience to date to demonstrate their readiness to develop. Applicants will generally have experience of more than one research environment.

Transition to leadership: applicants should have a track-record of nationally competitive research and already be independent and effectively leading a research team. They should demonstrate the potential to become a leader in their field.

From MRC:

Career stage	Training (PhD students)	Transition to independence	Transition to leadership
Relevant scheme(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical Research Training Fellowships PhD studentships - Funding for studentships is provided to research organisations. MRC does not fund students directly, so prospective students should contact the institution at which they wish to study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Development Award Clinician Scientist Fellowships New Investigator Research Grant ^{EQ} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Non-Clinical Fellowship Senior Clinical Fellowship
Key criteria	<p>Individuals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be planning to pursue a research career show a clear understanding of how the research project will progress knowledge within the field. 	<p>Individuals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> show productivity across past appointments and an upward trajectory demonstrate clear plans to establish own research 'niche'. 	<p>Individuals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a track record of nationally competitive research and managing own independent research group have clear plans to develop into an internationally recognised leader in the field.

- Use their guidance to direct how you write your application

From MRC:

Career stage	Training (PhD students)	Transition to independence	Transition to leadership
1. Research vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a clear understanding of how their research project will progress knowledge within the field and an understanding of the project's relevance to human health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have their own research plans/ideas which do not significantly overlap with their current group leaders' or proposed sponsors' describe how their research plans fit into an international context be able to explain plans to establish their intellectual niche and their own research team that will enable them to become an independent research leader have a network of research contacts, independent of their current group leader, including appropriate collaborations nationally, internationally and across disciplines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop an ambitious research and career development programme with a credible pathway to developing as an international leader demonstrate an effective track record of nationally competitive independent research demonstrate appropriate national/international collaborations, within/between/across disciplines as required describe how their research plans fit into an international context.

- If you can't write down in a couple of sentences why a research aim is important, maybe it isn't...
- And if you can't write down a **hypothesis**, then how do you know your experiment is designed correctly? Statistical support.
- Does it make sense to your best friend / 'person in the street'

Career stage	Training (PhD students)	Transition to independence	Transition to leadership
<p>H</p> <p>2. Research experience and potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have plans to pursue a research career, demonstrated, for example, through undergraduate research project experience, informal placement, or academic training positions for clinicians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a track record of challenging, original and productive research in their area which shows productivity across past appointments (typically at least one post-doctoral appointment), as well as an upward trajectory. For example as demonstrated by the quality of science within first author papers or equivalent outputs, recognising that in some fields there is equivalence, such as a critical contribution to multi-author publications. Please take care to explain your role in multi-author publications in your application demonstrate potential to lead independent research, for example by having collaborated with teams in other departments, research organisations and/or other disciplines, or by having won small amounts of independent funding be starting to show evidence of recognition and leadership in the community on an international scale, for example through citations to their publications, invitations to seminar/conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a strong track record of original and productive independent research with impact in the field (for example evidenced by senior author publication(s)) have success at securing research funding, such as previous intermediate fellowships to establish independence have standing/influence within the field and the community have a demonstrable track record of effective management of your own laboratory staff.

If this is your goal, be working on these points during your PhD, ACL, research post etc

From MRC:

Career stage	Training (PhD students)	Transition to independence	Transition to leadership
3. Personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have worked with their supervisors and host institution to develop a clear research question and project, as well as training plans to develop the skills to underpin a future research career be aware of and seek access to career development support, such as mentoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have identified, and where appropriate, pursued opportunities for development, such as time in a second research centre within the UK or overseas, or time spent within industry, or learning new skills have identified opportunities to access career development support, such as mentoring and professional training development, and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and pursue research training opportunities that broaden development, such as time in a second research centre or in industry be able to outline how they will use the fellowship to seek opportunities to develop their career, such as through mentoring and professional training development such as management and leadership training.
4. Leadership	Not strongly applicable at this career stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show an ability to identify and maximise potential in others. For example, through the day to day support of masters and PhD students, or early career scientists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a track record of identifying and maximising potential in others. For example, through managing and mentoring own staff and early career researchers, and as primary supervisor of PhD students.

Career stage

Training (PhD students)

Transition to independence

Transition to leadership

5. Communication and engagement skills

- show awareness of the context of their research in reference to societal and ethical issues
- understand the importance of public engagement activities and have an interest in developing relevant skills and experience.

- have excellent communication and interpersonal skills across different audiences, including academic and public, for example through presentation at scientific conferences and public science fairs
- show how research outcomes will be communicated and disseminated within and outside the research community.

- have excellent communication and interpersonal skills across different audiences, for example academic, public and media
- show how research outcomes will be communicated and disseminated within and outside the research community.

6. Profile and influence

Not strongly applicable at this career stage.

- show an understanding of how to influence their research field and awareness of ways to influence the wider research agenda. For example, through experience of participation in peer review, invitations to give lectures/seminars, participation in internal committees.

- show evidence of advising and influencing the research agenda. For example through development of research standards or guidelines, committee membership, research strategy at research organisational/national/international level.

From MRC:

NIHR: what makes an application excellent?

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blog/what-makes-an-application-excellent/10987>

By Prof Gary Frost, Chair of the NIHR Doctoral Fellowship selection committee

- **Clarity of writing** - No typos, grammatical, formatting errors
- **Importance** - You need to demonstrate that what you are doing is important.
 - Why should the NIHR invest in your work?
 - What difference will it make?
 - Make clear that your proposed research is applicable on a national level.
- **Five Ps:**
 - **Person** - Training plan is critically important
 - Don't just list graduate school courses, think about what weaknesses you have that challenge the delivery of your research and state how you will overcome these.
 - **Place** - You need to align yourself with the best of the best & make sure they have right experience
 - **Project** – hypothesis, if expt B relies on expt A which does not go to plan, what is alternative?
 - **Patient and public involvement (PPI)**

Patient and public involvement (PPI)

- This is as important as your project methodology. You must demonstrate how you are working in partnership with the patients of populations your project aims to help.
- You should develop a PPI plan at the beginning of the project that demonstrates how people will be involved and enhance your project from the initial idea to dissemination.
- This applies to all applicants, even those proposing data driven AI projects.
- The best applications thread PPI throughout their proposal, and state how the project will impact on patients and populations in the medium and long term.

Funding sources: support small(er) projects, travel, MSc etc.

- (MRC)
- (Wellcome) (Arts)
- (NIHR)
- BMA
- Charities
 - MQ
- Travel awards
- Pharma
- Local R&D, university
- Know the scheme
- Tailor your application to fit their profile and guidance
 - Strategy documents
- Success – ≤ 1 in 10?

Preparation, preparation, preparation

When to start?

- For a fellowship
- It is never too early to think about what you need to do.
 - 2-3 years
- Your CV
 - Have you got the appropriate/any publications?
 - Takes time
 - Have you experience in the techniques you want ‘£1million’ for?
 - Have you been to a conference, met with key people in the field?
 - ‘I do not know the candidate, but heard them present at a conference/read their latest interesting/important paper’

Preparation, preparation, preparation

When to start?

- For all applications (fellowships & grants)
- Start early – at least 6 months
 - Application submission dates are published well in advance
 - Several iterations will be needed
 - Departmental or university review?
 - Read the guidance about what is needed
 - Don't leave for eg impact statements etc to last minute.
 - How much notice does your university office want?
 - Finance, approvals etc
 - For a fellowship - does your Head of Department know YOU and about the application?
 - What other people need to sign off or provide letters of support for the application?

On UKRI website

<https://www.ukri.org/blog/fellowship-application-myth-busting/>

The screenshot shows the UKRI website header with the logo and navigation links: 'Apply for funding', 'Manage your award', 'What we offer', 'News and events', 'About us', and 'Our councils'. A search bar is also present. Below the header is a navigation menu with 'News', 'Blog', and 'Events'. The main content area features a large image of four scientists in a lab, with the title 'Fellowship application myth-busting' below it. To the right of the image is a 'Related content' section with three links: 'UKRI applying for an MRC fellowship: myths and misconceptions', 'Applying for fellowships', and 'Mock interview for a clinical research training fellowship'.

What do I look for?

- The candidate
 - Achievement and potential of the candidate
- The project
 - Does it make sense, do I understand why it should be done?
 - Feasibility and timeliness of project
 - Suitability of location

- Presentation
- Answer questions from 2 panel members, possibly some follow-up from Chair or others

And if at first you don't succeed.....

- Getting a fellowship or grant is hard simply because there are a lot of good, smart researchers out there applying for them
- Competing with all medical disciplines
- Why?
- Feedback
 - About project
 - About you if fellowship
- The process will have helped you develop your ideas about your research
- Continue to work on your CV, techniques etc

