

Early Career Academic Fellowships in AMBS: Criteria and Process

I. Context

Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) recognises that academic fellowships can be an important route to developing and/or consolidating one's research programme. For early career researchers (ECRs) in particular (normally individuals with less than 5 years between their PhD examination and the fellowship deadline) academic fellowships are often the primary means of making the transition from PhD to the first full-time academic role, or from a research associateship to a self-directed research programme.

However, fellowships are highly competitive, attracting applications from the best researchers across the world, and many require increasing and very substantial resources from the host institution. For example, a fellowship can cost a host institution more than £200k against revenue of less than £100k when overheads and other costs (e.g. payment for support staff, office space, etc.) are taken in account. In terms of time, a fellowship requires significant investments of time from the applicant, their academic mentor and research service staff. In cases where the prospective fellow is already employed in a teaching capacity at the university the fellowship would involve buy-out from teaching and administration that may need to be balanced against the work allocation of the fellow's division.

Overall our approach to academic fellowships must be aligned with the strategic priorities of AMBS to deliver world-leading research and teaching, both in the context of the Research Excellence Framework specifically, and the School's international reputation more broadly.

This document provides clarity around the criteria and processes for supporting an ECR's application for a fellowship.

2. Purpose

This document sets out criteria and a process for supporting an ECR's application for a fellowship, from initial dissemination of an opportunity to submission of an application. The process applies to both internal and external candidates. However, it is recognised that certain steps will be different in each circumstance. This will lead to greater clarity and transparency for existing ECRs within AMBS and a more streamlined process for non-AMBS ECRs who might be interested in applying for a fellowship with AMBS as a host institution. As a consequence, it is hoped that this will lead to better representation of AMBS-affiliated ECRs in fellowship schemes. The document is intended to foster an environment of support and transparency for early career researchers. Where they do not currently meet the criteria set out below, appropriate support will be offered to help them develop towards these.

3. Protocol

3.1. Criteria

In line with the Simon and Hallsworth definition, for the purposes of this document an ECR is anyone with less than 5 years between the date of their PhD viva voce examination and the date the relevant fellowship application will be submitted. Paternity/maternity leave and documented sick leave are taken into account and considered to interrupt this period.

However, note that other funders require more or less time and calculate this time differently. Therefore, **prospective fellowships applicants must always check their eligibility against the funders' guidelines before considering applying.**

In order to be **considered** for support for a fellowship at AMBS, an ECR must meet the following conditions:

- a. To have passed their PhD with references that clearly indicate potential for academic excellence.
- b. To have published (i.e. issued a DOI and published in an issue or online first) at least one research article as first or single author. The article does not need to originate from the PhD.
- c. To have published or have had accepted for publication, high quality research at the equivalent of REF 3* quality (internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigor). This will be interpreted by the Research Director in consultation with relevant colleagues where appropriate. The expected volume of published research at this level will be commensurate with the number of years post PhD. The minimum indicative volume of research would be as follows:
 - I. Up to two years post PhD – 1 output
 - II. Up to three years post PhD – 2 outputs
 - III. Up to 5 years post PhD – 3 outputs
- d. To be able to indicate a potential mentor for their fellowship application, i.e. a senior researcher who would be willing to provide academic guidance and support throughout the application process, including academic peer review of the application.

Whether or not an ECR meets these conditions will be determined during the pre-screening step of the application process (see 3.2 below). The quality of research articles will be judged relative to the ECR's research discipline on the basis of, e.g., journal ratings, disciplinary rankings and reputation, and number of citations. Peer review of an ECR's CV may be sought outside the ECR's immediate research field.

Note that if a prospective applicant meets criteria a-d that does not in itself guarantee that their application will be supported. Their application will be considered against a range of factors, including the research abstract (see the Process section below), impact on the AMBS budget, the quality of any other applications being considered from AMBS for the same scheme, and others.

3.2. Process

The process for applying for an early career academic fellowship will comprise the steps below (unless required otherwise by the funder) and follow the indicative timeline. Note that the periods indicated in the timeline are the minimum and it is strongly suggested that candidates allow more time to develop each stage of the application. Alternative timelines and additional steps may be required in the case of fellowships that are demand managed centrally by the University or the Faculty of Humanities. These will be communicated in advance.

- i. **Promote.** At least 10 weeks prior to submission. Led by Research Office and Associate Heads of Research within their respective divisions.
- ii. **Begin application.** At least 8 weeks prior to submission. The applicant must prepare a one-page abstract that summarises the proposed research and a 2-page CV, including publications, for internal review. If the applicant has existing or planned teaching or administrative commitments in AMBS, they should discuss with the relevant Head of Division how these might be affected by the fellowship.
- iii. **Pre-screening.** At least 7 weeks prior to submission. The AMBS Research Director will review the applicant's abstract, CV and any feedback from academic mentors against other relevant factors and decide whether the application can be supported.

- iv. **First draft, peer review, first cost.** At least 4 weeks prior to submission. Applicant prepares the first draft, which is then sent to their academic mentor for peer review. At the applicant's and mentor's discretion additional peer review may be sought. The peer review timelines are at the applicant's, mentor's and reviewers' discretion, provided the applicant has sufficient time to make any changes. The Research Office works with the applicant to prepare a budget. If required, the applicant is advised to notify their referees at this point.
- v. **Finalised cost, Research Project Approval (RPA), letter of support.** At least 2 weeks prior to submission. The Research Office works with the applicant to finalise the budget and a signed RPA form, ready for Head of School approval. The applicant continues working on the draft of the application with their mentor. If a letter of support is required from the Head of School or more senior staff, this will be organised by the Research Office as part of the RPA process.
- vi. **Submit.** The applicant submits, ideally at least a day before the deadline to avoid system failures on the day. The applicant sends the final draft of the application to the Research Office for their records.
- vii. **Approvals via online system.** Where relevant, the Research Office authorises the application via the relevant online system, usually immediately after the applicant submits.
- viii. **References via online system.** Where relevant, the applicant reminds their referees to provide their references via the relevant online system. The timescales vary by funder.
- ix. **Interview.** Where relevant, the applicant attends an interview for the Fellowship.
- x. **Outcome.** The applicant is notified by the funder of the outcome of the application and forwards the notification to the Research Office for their records.

3.3. Fellowship schemes in scope

This document applies to all early career academic fellowship schemes, including (non-exhaustive list): Simon, Hallsworth, Leverhulme Early Career, British Academy Postdoctoral, NIHR, Wellcome Trust, and ESRC Postdoctoral. **Note that fellowships that are processed through a job vacancy route rather than a research application route, such as the Simon and Hallsworth Fellowships, are in the scope of this document.**

Appendix: Early Career Fellowship Opportunities and Process Summary

Funding	Subject Area	Duration (months)	Max years post-doc	Cycle	Funding type	When to begin promoting	When to begin preparing
Simon	Social Science	36	5	Every Jan	Internal	Oct	Nov
Hallsworth	Political Economy	36	5	Every Jan	Internal	Oct	Nov
Leverhulme	Humanities and social science	36	4	Every Mar	50% salary (requires match & all overheads)	Dec	Jan
British Academy	Humanities and social science	36	3	Every Oct	80% fEC	July	Aug
NIHR	Health	36	3	Every winter	100% fEC	Nov	Dec
Wellcome Trust	Health	36	Flexible, but no permanent post	Every Jan and July	Salary costs (requires all overheads)	Nov, Apr	Dec, May
ESRC	Social Science	12	1	Every spring	80% fEC	Jan	Feb

Action	Promote	Begin application	Pre-screening	First draft, peer review, first cost	Finalised cost and RPA	Submit	Approvals via online system	References via online system	Interview	Outcome
Who is responsible	Research Office; AHRs	Fellow	Research Director	Fellow; Mentor; Research Office	Research Office; Fellow	Fellow	Head of Department; Research Office	Fellow's referees	Funder	Funder
When	- 10 weeks	- 8 weeks	- 7 weeks	- 4 weeks	- 2 weeks	Deadline	Deadline	+ 2 weeks	+ 5 months	+ 6 months
Which funders	All	All	All	Leverhulme BA NIHR Wellcome ESRC	Leverhulme BA NIHR Wellcome ESRC	All	Leverhulme BA NIHR Wellcome ESRC	Leverhulme BA NIHR Wellcome	Simon Hallsworth	All