Research Services

Royal Society
University Research Fellowships 2019
Application Guidance

Research Services deadline: 5pm on Wednesday 29 August 2018
Royal Society deadline: 3pm on Wednesday 5 September 2018

http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/university-research/

HEADLINE INFORMATION

• Roughly 41 awards issued including those below
• 3 Global Challenge Research Fund fellowships available to strong URF candidates whose work also meets GCRF criteria https://royalsociety.org/~media/grants/schemes/ODA-GCRF.pdf?la=en-GB
• The Royal Society continues to emphasize that these fellowships can be flexible enough to accommodate family and other leave. Additionally they encourage applications from traditionally under-represented groups.
• Changes to this round: The Society is providing newly appointed URF’s with an enhanced level of research expenses between October 2019 and the end of March 2021 due to additional funding from the UK Government’s Talent Fund (see Annex A)

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

Before you apply:
• Before preparing their application candidates must discuss their proposal with the Administrator and/or finance office in the department where they wish to hold the fellowship.
• Selection criteria for the URF scheme includes:
  ▪ the scientific merit of the individual: past achievements, research career to date, publication record, likely contribution to research field, future potential;
  ▪ the host institution: suitability, appropriate expertise/equipment, research environment, support;
  ▪ the proposed research project: quality and originality of proposed project, definition of research plan, likelihood of achieving goals.
• Applicants should consult senior academics in the department to establish whether the scheme is suitable for their level and also for advice on preparing the form and the proposal.
• The Royal Society welcomes enquiries from applicants who are unsure if they meet the criteria (send a short outline of the proposal to URF@royalsociety.org)
• URFs are highly competitive (roughly 41 awarded per year, approximately 8% of applications) but Royal Society have emphasised that applicants should not be put off by these statistics.
• There is the opportunity to reapply the following year using a revised version of the same application form having incorporated feedback from the Royal Society (if the applicant is still eligible); one current Oxford fellow applied three times before being successful. This highlights that there may be some merit in applying at an early stage.
Head of Department and Referees’ statements: The Head of Department and 2 referees nominated by the applicant will be contacted directly via email by Flexi-Grant to supply a statement. They can be invited under the Participants tab in the Application Portal. Please ensure that they are able to supply a statement by **5pm on 29 August 2018**

- One referee should be someone who has worked closely with the applicant
- One referee should be external to the applicant’s current research group (it is preferred, if possible, that one referee is international)

**PLEASE NOTE:** When supplying their statement, the Head of Department / referees will need to mark their participation as complete and then click ‘Save and submit’ before the PI can press submit.

Use of non-human primates (NHPs)
If you require the use of any non-human primates or will use the behavioural sciences unit as part of your research programme you must complete Oxford’s internal form available from your departmental administrator detailing whether or not you will need space in the Biomedical Science Building (BSB).

**SUBMISSION AND REVIEW PROCESS**

**N.B. As of 1 January 2016, Research Services will not review fellowship applications to the Royal Society under £1m. If the value of the fellowship applied for falls below the £1m threshold, it will be submitted by RS without review (unless the Department specifically asks RS to review it, in exceptional circumstances, at least 5 working days prior to the funder’s deadline).**

- The applicant should complete their application in the Flexi-Grant portal. The Head of Department and nominated referees will receive automated emails requesting them to provide their references / statements via Flexi-Grant.
- Once the application has been completed in Flexi-Grant and referees have submitted their references / statements, the applicant should press submit in Flexi-Grant. The departmental administrator / finance office must submit the X5 costing to Research Services at this point also.

  **N.B. Submission route in Flexi-Grant: PI -> Research Services -> Royal Society**

- Once submitted the status of the application can be checked at any time by logging onto Flexi-Grant and viewing ‘Submitted Applications’
- Flexi-Grant support can be found here: http://royalsocietyapplicantsupport.fluenttechnology.com/support/solutions
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview at the Royal Society in April 2019.
- Following interview the Royal Society will e-mail successful candidates in late May 2019.

**HELPFUL LINKS**

- The Royal Society web site: [http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/university-research/](http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/university-research/)
- Case studies of successful applicants can be found at the bottom of this page.
- The Royal Society’s online electronic application system Flexi-Grant: [https://grants.royalsociety.org/](https://grants.royalsociety.org/)
- Research Services’ web pages on the Royal Society: [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/sponsors/rs/Flexi-Grant2/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/sponsors/rs/Flexi-Grant2/)

Annex A – Checklist for applicants
Annex B – X5 checklist for administrators
Annex C – Oxford tips
Annex D – Guidance for administrators on Salary costing in X5
**Annex A – Applicant Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| **Eligibility** | The PI must:  
  • Hold a PhD  
  • Be an early-career researcher  
  • Not hold a permanent post  
  • Not have previously held a similar fellowship |
| **Budget**      | The Departmental Administrator or Finance Officer in the proposed host department will be able to calculate the costs required for the proposal, and create an X5 costing for the project which must match the application. |
| **Flexi-Grant** | The final copy of the application must be submitted on Flexi-Grant before 5pm 29 August 2018 (at the very latest).                                                                                       |
| **PDFs**        | All attached PDFs must include the applicant’s name and a descriptive title of the document at the top of each page.                                                                                      |
| **Publications**| Highlight the 3 most significant publications in the list of publications. *PDF files of publications are not required.*                                                                                  |
| **Start date**  | The project start date **must** be 1 October 2019                                                                                                                                                       |
| **Duration**    | The project will last 5 years (although the Royal Society is flexible and requests for part-time working can be sought at a later date).                                                            |
| **% time**      | At this stage must be 100% full time equivalent (part time status can be sought later).                                                                                                                |
| **Justification**| All research expenses and any Small Research Facility costs requested must be justified, i.e. what will the money be used for and why is this important for the project? (N.B. the Royal Society reserves the right to award at a lower amount if the funds are not fully justified).  
  Salary costs do not require justification, although the salary should be appropriate for the experience of the applicant.  
  Estates or Indirect costs **do not** have to be justified. |
| **Research Expenses** | Research Expenses are capped at £13,000 for year 1 and £11,000 for years 2-5.  
  **New for 2019:** the Society will provide **additional** research expenses as follows:  
  - in FY 2019/20 (1 October 2019-31 March 2020) up to £40,000  
  - in FY 2020/21 (1 April 2020-31 March 2021) up to £80,000  
  Further information about how these additional funds for 2019/20-2020/21 (in addition to the £13,000 in year 1 and the £11,000 for years 2-5) may be used can be found in the [Royal Society URF Scheme Notes](#).  
  Please note: the Society is not currently committing any additional funding for research expenses beyond the end of March 2021. |
### Animals

If the project requires the use of NHPs or the behavioural unit, Oxford’s animal use form must be completed and signed by the appropriate departmental officer and sent to the relevant Senior Research Funding Specialist for the department. It is advisable to arrange this well in advance as there are a number of signatures required.

### HoD support / referees

It is advisable to arrange these at least **two weeks in advance of the deadline** as the Head of Department and nominated referees will need to upload their own statements onto Flexi-Grant before the applicant can submit to the institutional approver.

### Justification for Host Institution

Applicants who have been successful previously have discussed the following factors in justifying their application hosted by Oxford:

- The strength of the University and the Department in the wider research field (i.e. breakthroughs made at the University in the same research area; notable researchers at the host institution working in the research field; a critical mass of researchers working in the field to provide the opportunity to develop collaborations)
- Existing active collaborators with researchers at the institution
- Whether the department will be able to provide the applicant with access to lab space or any specific facilities/equipment/resources in order to perform the proposed research.
- Personal Development opportunities (i.e. the opportunity to develop new skills and techniques; female scientist role models; how the environment will allow the applicant to develop into an independent researcher)

### Annex B – X5 checklist for administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>- Inflation is not applicable on any costs – the URF scheme in X5 has been configured to exclude inflation across all budget headings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Fellow’s Salary             | - Must be in the DI Staff heading and be for the entire duration of the proposed fellowship.  
                        |   - The starting salary (on the application) should be appropriate to the PI’s experience and no more than £40,354.58. If the department wishes to employ the fellow at a higher salary then the department will need to provide the remaining salary. |
| No mentor costs or support staff | - No mentor / sponsor / supervisor / support staff costs should be included |
| Research Expenses           | - Expenses are capped at £13,000 for year 1, and £11,000 thereafter.  
                        |   - **New for 2019**: the Society will provide additional research expenses as follows:  
                        |   - in FY 2019/20 (1 October 2019-31 March 2020) up to £40,000  
                        |   - in FY 2020/21 (1 April 2020-31 March 2021) up to £80,000 |
Further information about how these additional funds for 2019/20-2020/21 (in addition to the £13,000 in year 1 and the £11,000 in years 2-5) may be used can be found in the Royal Society URF Scheme Notes.

Please note: the Society is not currently committing any additional funding for research expenses beyond the end of March 2021.

| fEC Rules | 80% fEC price for DI Staff, DA Staff and Estates, and Indirects. 100% for DI non-staff with the exception of PDRA costs which the Society will fund at 80%. |
| Price on Royal Society application form | Input the 100% FAC figures (for all of DI Staff and non-staff, Estates and Indirects) into the finance table on Flexi-Grant as the prices. Use the ‘display FAC in yrs’ drop down on the X5 price page to show you the figures you need. |
| ODA Compliance | ODA countries must be added in the X5 keywords for GCRF applications or if the proposed research involves ODA eligible countries. |

Annex C - Oxford Tips

The Head of Department and Referees need to ‘complete’ their sections (including the uploading of letters, etc) and click ‘Save and submit’ (on the application form page) or ‘Submit your contribution’ (on the summary page).

Tips from the Royal Society Early Career Researcher Workshop June 2018

Four existing Fellows spoke of their experiences applying for a URF. Some highlights / tips include:

- Plan ahead – don’t write your proposal at the last minute
- Structure your text and work plan clearly and carefully
- Allow time to show your research statement to others (including your grants team) and ask for feedback
- What are they looking for in your proposal:
  - They are looking to fund you more than the research
  - Grand challenges
  - Not just incremental research
- What are they looking for in you:
  - Independence
  - Enthusiasm
  - Good communicator
  - Next leader
  - Publications
  - Grants
  - International collaborations
  - Excellent references (requires networking beforehand)
- You may need to apply more than once before you are successful
Statistics of 10 recent Oxford URF Awardees [statistics taken from time of submission]

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of Post-Doctoral Research</td>
<td>Fairly even spread within the 3-8 year eligibility window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing grants held by applicant</td>
<td>50% of the applicants had previously successfully acquired their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>own funding from other sources whereas the remainder had no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>existing independent funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of publications</td>
<td>Applicants had an average of 23 publications, ranging from 9 to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received prizes/invited</td>
<td>50% of successful applicants discussed prizes, awards or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lectures/awards</td>
<td>invited lectures in their personal statements, whereas the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>remaining 50% did not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Oxford fellows can be found here: [https://royalsociety.org/fellows/research-fellows-directory/](https://royalsociety.org/fellows/research-fellows-directory/)
Annex D – Guidance for administrators on salary costing in X5

The Royal Society allows for a 3% annual increase for basic salaries, the tables below provide figures for fellows appointed at 8.01 and above. For reference see this year’s Royal Society URF Scheme Notes.

If the department wishes to employ the fellow higher than Grade 8, spine point 1, the maximum allowable starting salary from the Royal Society is £40,354.58, which is lower than 8.02. A department choosing to appoint beyond 8.01 will therefore need to pay the balance of the salary from its own budget.

Starting salary at 8.01 with annual increments calculated using the Royal Society’s 3%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Salary (£)</th>
<th>NI and Pension (£)</th>
<th>Total (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>39,993.00</td>
<td>11,755.23</td>
<td>51,748.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>41,211.96</td>
<td>12,148.95</td>
<td>53,360.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42,417.96</td>
<td>12,538.49</td>
<td>54,956.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>43,685.04</td>
<td>12,947.75</td>
<td>56,632.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>44,991.96</td>
<td>13,369.89</td>
<td>58,361.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>212,299.92</td>
<td>62,760.31</td>
<td>275,060.23*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*If starting the fellow on 8.01, this figure will match X5 total (X5 increments equate to a 3% annual increase)

Using Royal Society’s maximum salary if someone is to be appointed above 8.01, with annual increments calculated using the Royal Society’s 3%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Salary (£)</th>
<th>NI and Pension (£)</th>
<th>Total (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40,354.56</td>
<td>11,872.01</td>
<td>52,226.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>41,565.24</td>
<td>12,263.05</td>
<td>53,828.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42,812.16</td>
<td>12,665.82</td>
<td>55,477.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>44,096.52</td>
<td>13,080.66</td>
<td>57,177.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>45,419.40</td>
<td>13,507.96</td>
<td>58,927.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214,247.88</td>
<td>63,389.50</td>
<td>277,637.38**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Manually over-type the number in the FAC box on the Price tab in X5 with this number

NB – If the department requires further guidance on how to cost the salary in X5, please get in touch with your usual Research Services contact.