

Title	School Guidelines for Externally Funded Postdoctoral/Visiting Fellow applications not led by Sussex
Status	Agreed at School Research Committee
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Context and aims:

The School is keen to support applications for postdoctoral fellowships from early-career researchers both from the UK and internationally. There is already a process in place for all Sussex-led applications (MSCF, BA, UKRI, Leverhulme Trust etc) which are reviewed and processed by the DRAKEs and the Research Development Office. If the PDRF application is led by Sussex, the fellowship is salaried via Sussex according to the terms of the scheme; no bench fees are incurred and existing systems of approval apply (including for HoS approval if there is a negative financial contribution to the School). We also have established guidance in place for Visiting Fellows and Visiting Students, including consistent practice on bench fees. However, recent requests have identified an area that is not covered by existing guidelines.

ESW staff receive occasional requests to host and provide mentorship for postdoctoral fellows who make external applications to diverse international funders; in these cases, the fellow is directly salaried by the funder (not via Sussex) and the funding application is outside our existing systems. Recent cases have highlighted variation and sometimes lack of clarity about the funding and expectations of ESW, and there is a risk of inequitable and inconsistent practice. There is also a question of potential costs to the School and University (in staff time and the support funded via bench fees) which need to be balanced alongside the value for the School of a vibrant postdoctoral community. Hence, this gap in policy needs to be addressed.

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1. Bench Fees

- If the fellow is *not* salaried via Sussex, the School will charge bench fees for the duration of the fellowship – currently £1000 per term (or £350 per month) up to £3000 per year – in line with existing policy on Visiting Fellows.
- If it is not possible for the prospective fellow to include bench fees in the fellowship application, the host (mentor) can seek approval *in advance of the fellowship application being submitted to*:
 - use their devolved (PA Account) funds to cover bench fees (subject to agreement of HOS);
 - draw on Research Centre budget to cover bench fees (subject to agreement from Centre Director and DRAKE in addition to HOS); or
 - make a written request to HOS to waive or reduce bench fees if sufficient case can be made for the value of the fellow's contribution to the School (subject to agreement of HOS and DRAKE).

2. Staff time for mentoring

- Staff time commitment for mentoring a postdoctoral research fellow would normally, at a minimum, be equivalent to the workload commitment for PhD supervision (45 hours per year).
- If possible within the terms of the funding scheme, the fellowship application should include funded time allocation for the Sussex mentor. This costing must be done by the Research Development Office, and is subject to review and approval (see below), including HOS approval if the funding is at a level which incurs a negative contribution to the school.
- If there is *no* funding for mentor's time, then:
 - the fellowship will require additional approval *in advance of submission* from HoS and DRAKE; and
 - the mentor must confirm (a) that they have capacity within their research workload allocation to fulfil the supervisory commitment, and (b) the relevance of the fellowship to their own research plans.

3. Approvals

- In all cases, the fellowship application must be approved *in advance of submission* by the DRAKE using the Visiting Fellow form and appending the postdoctoral fellowship application and a CV.
- In line with University policy, where there is a negative financial contribution to the School, HOS approval is required.

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Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange
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