

SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES

Policy for the Career Development of Independent Research Fellows

Summary

The School of Life Sciences welcomes applications from promising scientists who have obtained, or would like to obtain, competitively awarded Fellowships. We are keen to recruit and sponsor the very best researchers of the future and encourage applications from those returning from a career break. The School of Life Sciences is committed to increasing the diversity of its staff and providing an inclusive working environment. The School currently holds an Athena SWAN Silver Award, has developed a Race Equity Action Plan and hosts an active Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group. Applications are particularly welcomed from black and minority ethnic candidates, and women, trans and non-binary candidates, who are under-represented in the School of Life Sciences.

Research Fellows establishing an independent research profile are accorded principal investigator status within the School, and benefit from access to shared research facilities, infrastructure and resources. Fellows who would like to obtain sponsorship for their Fellowship should initially apply via the relevant Head of Department, copying in the Head of School and Deputy Head of School for Research and Enterprise. This document summarises the School's policy with regard to the career advancement and progression of Fellows.

1) TYPES OF FELLOWSHIP CONSIDERED FOR TENURE TRACK APPOINTMENTS*

We welcome Fellows funded by schemes at all career levels including Postdoctoral Fellowships, Career Re-entry Fellowships, Early Career Fellowships, Career Development Fellowships, Senior Fellowships and Professorial Fellowships.

To be considered for a permanent post at the end of their Fellowship via a tenure track route, Fellows must:

1. Hold a Fellowship of a level intended to provide support for the Fellow to initiate an independent career leading their own research team, or to further develop or expand their existing research team.

and

2. Hold Fellowship funding of 5-years or more or have received a renewal (via a 3 + 2 or 4 + 2 etc scheme) to extend the Fellowship to 5 years or more.

Researchers funded by Postdoctoral Fellowships, early-stage Fellowships (where Fellows work within or are closely associated with the laboratory of a Principal Investigator) or Fellowships funded for less than 5 years will not be considered for a

permanent post at the end of their funded period. Such individuals will be encouraged to seek follow-on Fellowship funding or can apply for relevant posts in the School.

If in doubt as to whether you qualify for consideration of tenure, it is best to consult the Head of School.

*This policy sets out the School position in supporting the route to a permanent faculty post for independent fellows. It does not replace or alter the HR managed process of issuing open-ended contracts for researchers in posts funded for 3 years or more. Fellows funded for 3 years or more will therefore be issued with an open ended contract that contains a funding clause stating 'Your employment remains supported by specific external funding or project funding and, should this funding cease, you would be at risk of redundancy.' If appointed to an open ended (permanent) faculty position in the process described here, an appointment letter will be issued for the new role without this funding clause.

2) MENTORING

All Fellows will be assigned an experienced member of faculty as a mentor, to provide advice on establishing a laboratory, managing workload, writing grants and papers, and general career development. The mentor, in discussion with the Head of School or Head of Department, will be responsible for arranging a mid-term review. The review will consist of a written report and a meeting at which the Fellow will present current progress and future research plans.

Guidance will be given to address any areas for improvement and the Fellow's career intentions will be discussed. A dedicated programme of career and professional development training courses, seminars, workshops and activities is available at the University and all Fellows are encouraged to access these development resources.

3) SCHOOL PROCESS FOR RECOMMENDING AWARD OF A PERMANENT POST

- The major decision will occur 1 year before the end of the 5 year (or longer) Fellowship.
- The Fellow will give a research seminar open to the School.
- The Fellow will attend a formal interview, at which they will present research plans, and answer detailed technical and general questions.
- At least two external written reviews of the Fellow's work and potential will be obtained from referees not nominated by the Fellow prior to the interview.
- The interview panel will be chaired by the Head of School. It will include the Deputy Head of School for Research and Enterprise and/or the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, at least one external expert and two other suitably-qualified senior academics, including one from a different Department.

- In reaching a decision, the panel will take into account the track record of the Fellow, their potential to become a world-leading scientist, the School's research portfolio, and overall strategic and budgetary considerations.
- The panel will decide whether to recommend an offer of a permanent academic appointment (see details below) to be approved through normal University approval processes via the post panel chaired by the Provost or Vice Chancellor.
- If the School panel declines tenure, the Fellow's appointment will terminate at the end of their Fellowship funding in line with normal HR processes for funding-limited posts.

Criteria for appointment to a permanent post

Research excellence: The primary criterion for the appointment is research excellence and promise, at the level commensurate with the University's published criteria for the level of post you are being considered for. Candidates are expected to have a record of substantial publications, and a sustained and independent research reputation. Important contributory evidence may include the candidate's ability to attract research funding, contracts and/or consultancies, to successfully supervise (or co-supervise) doctoral students and to demonstrate impact and societal/economic benefit from their research. Successful supervision of MSc/BSc students, contribution to the research environment in the Department and involvement in outreach/engagement will also be taken into account.

Teaching considerations: A substantial track record of teaching will not be considered a key requirement of the candidate's track record. However, previous engagement in some level of teaching (including student project supervision) would be an expectation. In considering the appointment, the panel will be seeking individuals willing and open-minded to participate and innovate in future teaching activities and keen to contribute to the School's mission of training the next generation of scientists. Candidates should proactively identify areas of our teaching programmes and curriculum which they are keen to develop. Obtaining a PGCertHE or FHEA will be a normal expectation of the appointment in line with University requirements for the post. Collegiality and willingness to contribute to organisational roles will also be welcomed.

Level and type of post

The School panel can only consider and recommend appointments to permanent posts at the Grade at which the Fellow is employed at the time of assessment, and will not be able to promote Fellows to a different Grade or Title. The appointment will be on the Education and Research (E & R) Career Pathway and normally be that of Lecturer for Grade 8 Research Fellows or Senior Lecturer for Grade 9 Senior Research Fellows. This transition therefore represents a move from a career track with research as the main activity to one where teaching is also a key responsibility, with

workload managed in the same way as for other staff on E & R contracts. The new appointment will be subject to the normal probationary processes.

Promotion

In line with University policies, Fellows are free to apply for promotion on the research career pathway through the normal promotion application process at any time during their Fellowship. Applications will be assessed according to published University criteria and promotion procedures.

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