

FELLOWSHIPS GUIDANCE 2026

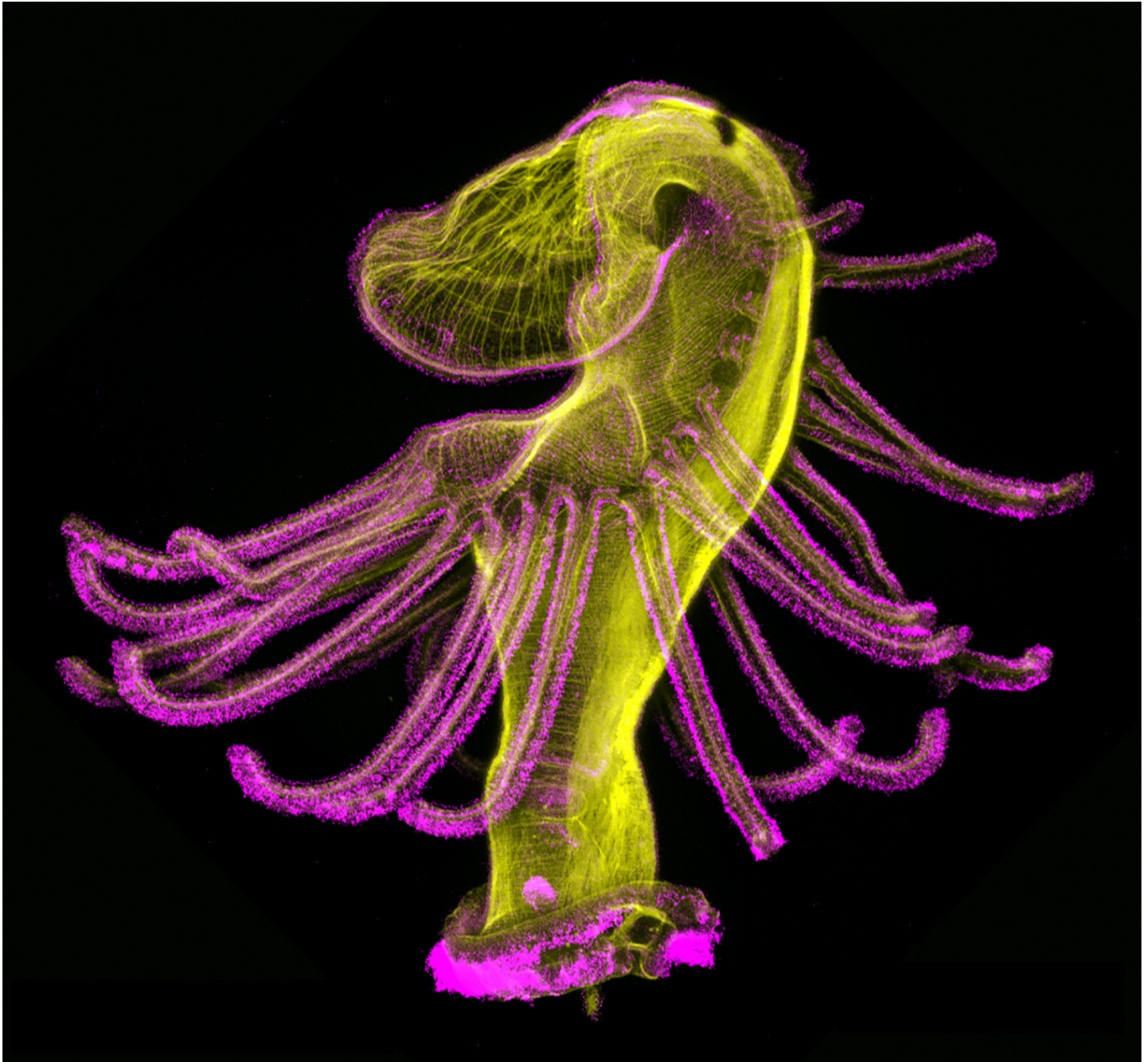


Image courtesy of Allan Carrillo-Baltodano

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This guidance explains how the School of Biological and Behavioural Sciences (SBBS) supports externally funded fellowship applications. It is designed to help researchers develop high-quality proposals, provide clear expectations and timelines, ensure fair and transparent decision-making, and enable effective use of School resources.

Fellowships are organized into three categories and depending on the category, different processes will need to be followed (see Appendix A and B). As a general note, fellowships in Categories 2 and 3 require applicants to apply through the School's fellowship selection rounds. These are independent fellowships and typically last 5 years or more.

SBBS welcomes outstanding researchers from the UK and overseas and particularly encourages applications from those in underrepresented groups and those returning from a career break. Our fellowship programme supports research independence through a collaborative environment spanning biology, biochemistry and psychology, with access to tailored expert mentorship, internal peer review, interview preparation, research facilities and wider Queen Mary networks.

2. PRINCIPLES

This Guidance sets out the following principles:

- **Application numbers.** SBBS will not impose unnecessary limits except where required by funder or University demand management, or where demand exceeds the School's capacity to provide appropriate support.
- **Early engagement.** Applicants should engage with the SBBS process early enough (typically at least 4 months prior to submission if applying for large fellowships) to allow meaningful scientific, strategic and institutional input.
- **Shared responsibility.** Applicants retain ownership of their proposal, while sponsors/mentors, Research Centres and professional services contribute to its development.
- **Fairness and transparency.** Selection and prioritisation will be evidence-led, proportionate to the scheme and communicated clearly.
- **Proportionate support.** All fellowship applicants will receive appropriate mentoring and application support, including peer review where appropriate. More extensive, structured support will be provided for major independent fellowships, reflecting scheme requirements and available School capacity.

3. ENSURING HIGH-QUALITY APPLICATIONS

SBBS is committed to supporting the development of strong, competitive fellowship proposals based on excellent research and clear potential for independence and leadership.

Applicants are expected to:

- Engage with the School's processes and internal pre-submission deadlines.
- Work closely with their academic sponsor/mentor from an early stage.
- Develop a proposal that is well aligned with the fellowship scheme and the SBBS research environment.

The School will provide:

- Advice on eligibility, positioning and strategic fit.
- Support in identifying an appropriate academic sponsor/mentor.
- Internal peer review and feedback at key stages of proposal development.
- Budgeting support using our research management system (Worktribe).
- Support with the development of institutional support statements.
- Structured interview preparation, including mock interviews.

All guidance and processes are designed to strengthen the quality and competitiveness of applications while avoiding unnecessary barriers.

4. CANDIDATE SELECTION AND PRIORITISATION

Demand managed schemes:

For schemes where funders impose limits on the number of applications, a formal preselection of candidates is required and is usually administered at the University level (e.g. for UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships).

Non-demand managed schemes:

For schemes without funder limits, applications will generally be supported without formal caps but will still require Head of School approval. Major fellowships (typically five years or longer) must go through the School's fellowship selection rounds. Shorter fellowships (typically under five years) do not normally require formal selection but still require School approval.

When demand exceeds School capacity, internal ranking exercises will be incorporated into the timeline and selection of candidates. This will ensure that the School puts forward the strongest and most competitive applications, while maintaining a fair approach to decision-making.

5. APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

The exact pathway will vary by fellowship type and duration, but applications will typically progress through the following stages:

- **Early Expression of Interest (EoI):** a concise project outline, CV, and cover letter outlining your fit within SBBS, potential mentors, and significant resources or institutional commitments required.
- **Confidentiality and data protection:** Expressions of interest and draft applications will be handled in line with data protection legislation and Queen Mary policies. Materials may be shared with appropriate academic and professional services colleagues within SBBS, the Faculty or University where necessary for review and institutional approval. Information will be treated as confidential and used only for these purposes.
- **Strategic fit and feasibility:** discussion with the relevant Research Centre Lead, sponsor/mentor and, for major schemes, the SBBS Fellowship Committee and School leadership.
- **Sponsor/mentor assignment:** an academic sponsor/mentor supports proposal development, career positioning and integration with the relevant research community.
- **Candidate engagement:** for major schemes, shortlisted external candidates will be invited to give a seminar and meet relevant academics to assess mutual scientific and strategic fit.

- **Proposal development:** iterative drafting with sponsor/mentor input and appropriate professional services support.
- **Peer review:** independent academic review proportionate to the scale and complexity of the application, including both specialist and broader-reader feedback where useful.
- **Institutional checks and approval:** confirmation of budget, Worktribe, space/facilities, regulatory issues and any commitments before submission.
- **Interview preparation:** mock interview and strategic preparation for shortlisted applicants where the funder includes an interview stage.

For major external fellowships, candidates should normally make contact at least four months before the funder deadline. Earlier contact is strongly encouraged for schemes requiring significant institutional commitments or internal demand management.

6. ACADEMIC SPONSORS AND MENTORS

All applicants are encouraged to identify an appropriate SBBS academic sponsor/mentor at an early stage. Sponsors/mentors provide strategic scientific guidance, review drafts, help position the applicant for independence, connect them with relevant expertise and facilities, and support development of the host environment and career-development case. SBBS can help identify a suitable sponsor where needed.

7. WHAT SBBS OFFERS

The School will provide:

- A structured Fellowship application process with a realistic timeline and milestones;
- One-to-one academic mentoring and access to relevant Research Centre expertise;
- Internal peer review at key stages;
- Guidance on budgets, Worktribe and institutional approvals;
- Support in developing institutional letters and commitments;
- Access to SBBS facilities, research networks and wider Queen Mary expertise;
- Seminar and faculty engagement for selected major-fellowship candidates;
- Mock interviews and strategic interview guidance, where appropriate;
- Ongoing mentorship and integration into the Queen Mary fellowship community for successful fellows, including advice on future funding applications, student supervision, engagement and impact.

8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Applicants and successful fellows may be invited to share feedback, interview insights and lessons learned. SBBS will use this experience to strengthen future fellowship support and maintain scheme-specific knowledge across the School.

APPENDICES

A. FELLOWSHIP CATEGORIES

The schemes below illustrate fellowships that are particularly relevant to SBBS. Eligibility, duration and deadlines change regularly; applicants should always consult the current funder guidance. SBBS may support other appropriate schemes on a case-by-case basis.

Category 1 - Mobility and early-career fellowships. These schemes are aimed at researchers at an early stage of their career, typically to join an existing lab. They are typically shorter and focus on developing independence, enhancing skills, and building experience. Examples include (for a full list visit our [SBBS Research Fellowships webpage](#)):

Scheme	Best suited to
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowship	International mobility fellowships for postdoctoral researchers, supporting research, training and career development.
Royal Society Newton International Fellowship	For outstanding early-career researchers based outside the UK who wish to undertake research in the UK.
EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship	Supports international mobility and advanced postdoctoral research in the life sciences.
Human Frontier Science Program Postdoctoral Fellowship	For outstanding early-career researchers (within 3 years of PhD). Fellows must move to a different country from where they did their PhD.
Daphne Jackson Fellowship	Flexible fellowships supporting researchers returning to research after a career break.
BBSRC independence fellowship	Researchers developing independence in bioscience and biotechnology, subject to the current BBSRC fellowship call.
British Academy / ESRC postdoctoral schemes	Relevant to eligible behavioural and social-science research within SBBS, subject to scheme remit and eligibility.

Category 2 - Transition to independence and research leadership. Substantial multi-year awards for researchers establishing or consolidating an independent programme. These schemes commonly require significant host support and early engagement with SBBS. Examples include (for a full list visit our [SBBS Research Fellowships webpage](#)):

Scheme	Best suited to
NERC Independent Research Fellowship (IRF)	Environmental sciences researchers with strong potential for independent research leadership.
Royal Society University Research Fellowship (URF)	Outstanding researchers in the natural sciences building an independent research career.
UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF)	Ambitious researchers developing independence and leadership across UKRI remits; demand managed.
ERC Starting Grant	Researchers ready to establish an independent team and pursue ambitious frontier research.
Wellcome Early-Career Award	Researchers developing research identity and independence in discovery research relevant to human life, health and wellbeing.
MRC Career Development Award	Supports medically focused researchers to transition to independence.

Category 3 - Established and developing research leaders. Awards for researchers consolidating leadership, developing a substantial independent programme or pursuing a major new research direction.

Scheme	Best suited to
Wellcome Career Development Award	Mid-career researchers with the potential to become international research leaders in discovery research relevant to human life, health and wellbeing.
ERC Consolidator Grant	Independent researchers consolidating a research team and programme in frontier research.
Royal Society Faraday Discovery Fellowship	Long-term support for exceptional research leaders tackling ambitious, fundamental scientific challenges.
Other discipline-specific senior fellowships	Considered where the scheme aligns with SBBS research strengths and the required institutional commitment is feasible.

APPENDIX B. SBBS FELLOWSHIP GUIDANCE IN ACTION

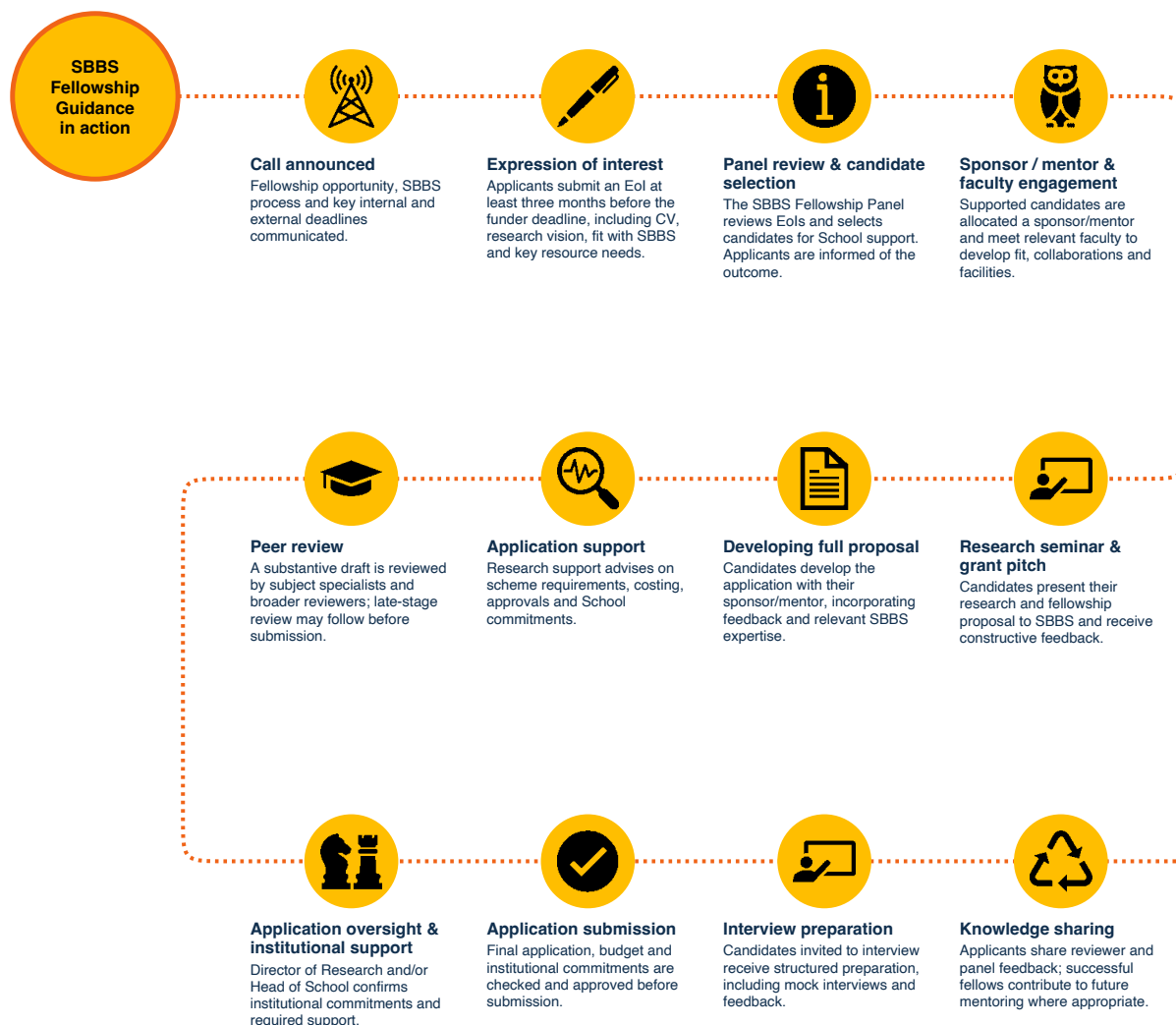
These schematics show the typical support pathway. Exact timings and stages will be tailored to the fellowship scheme and funder requirements.

Category 1 Early-Career and Mobility Fellowships



NOTE: Demand-managed or high-commitment schemes may include formal internal selection before full proposal development.

Category 2 and 3: Independence and Research Leadership Fellowships



NOTE: Demand-managed or high-commitment schemes may include formal internal selection before full proposal development.

APPENDIX C. PLANNING YOUR APPLICATION

Because fellowship deadlines and internal requirements change, SBBS does not publish a fixed annual deadline table in this guidance. The current funder call and any Queen Mary demand-management process always take precedence.

When	Applicant action	Typical SBBS support
4+ months before deadline	For major fellowships, submit an early enquiry/EoI and identify a potential sponsor.	Strategic-fit and feasibility assessment; demand-management advice; mentor/sponsor coordination.
8-12 weeks before	Develop the project, career-development case and host environment; identify significant resource needs.	Mentoring; Research Centre engagement; seminar/meetings where appropriate; early budget planning.
4-6 weeks before	Produce a coherent full draft and near-final budget.	Formal peer review; Worktribe and institutional support development.
2-3 weeks before	Revise in response to review and finalise supporting information.	Late-stage review, approvals and final institutional checks.
After submission	Prepare for interview if invited.	Mock interview, panel-style questioning and strategic feedback.

CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Prospective applicants should contact the relevant SBBS Research Centre Lead or a potential academic sponsor as early as possible. Informal expressions of interest are welcome throughout the year.

SBBS Research Fellowships: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sbbs/research/research-fellowships/>

For School-level fellowship processes and major institutional-support requests, contact the SBBS Fellowship Committee through the School. sbbs-fellowships@qmul.ac.uk

This document provides School guidance only. Funder and Queen Mary policies, eligibility rules, deadlines and demand-management requirements take precedence and should be checked for each application.