**Guidance on International Training Fellowship**

**Introduction**

Wellcome has evolved its approach to research careers and reviewed the use of time-post qualification as an eligibility criterion. Time based eligibility criteria do not always accurately reflect research maturity and stage of independence, particularly when researchers have moved fields or had career breaks. In order to provide greater flexibility and clarity, we have removed years of post-doctoral experience as an eligibility criterion. We will look at your research plans, vision and competitiveness relative to your career stage when assessing your application.

**What is the aim of the International Training Fellowship?**

The aim of this scheme is to provide support for you in the early years of your research career to consolidate your research skills and gain additional training to allow you to explore new research areas within the Science remit. This will enable you to mature as a researcher and develop your research vision. This fellowship is not about building your own group but about learning the new research skills and techniques you will need to establish yourself as an independent researcher leader in the future. The fellowship enables you to develop your own ideas and answer your own research questions while still benefitting from the guidance of an experienced supervisor. If you are in the early stages of your research career but do not already have a PhD we would expect you to register for one as part of the fellowship.

**What is an early-career researcher?**

Early-career researchers will typically have a PhD and some initial but limited postdoctoral research experience. At this career stage, researchers will usually have started to make important contributions to research. This may include publications, patents, software development, impact on health policy or practice, technology development or product discovery and development. They will be starting to drive their own research (usually evidenced by publications) but are not yet ready to lead their own independent research group.For this scheme, an early career researcher may also be someone who has gained research experience and demonstrated an aptitude for research but does not yet have a PhD – we would expect those individuals to register for a PhD as part of the fellowship. Early career researchers require more time to consolidate their existing experiences and further training to explore new scientific areas or acquire additional technical or methodological skills, under the guidance of an experienced supervisor.

**I’ve got 5 years post-doctoral experience. Should I apply for a Training Fellowship or an Intermediate Fellowship?**

With 5 years post-doctoral experience we would usually expect you to be ready for an Intermediate Fellowship, however, we recognise that career paths may not always be linear and that not everyone progresses in the same way. To determine the most appropriate fellowship you need to establish which career stage most accurately describes your experience. Early-career researchers who would benefit from further guided training should apply for a Training Fellowship while intermediate (early-independent) researchers should apply for an Intermediate Fellowship.

The Training Fellowship is aimed at consolidating your own skills and exploring new research through further training and is not about building your own research group whereas the Intermediate Fellowship is considered to be your first independent award and is aimed at experienced researchers who are ready to start building an independent research programme.

Check the definition of an early-career researcher above to see if it describes your experience. Alternatively, early-independent (intermediate) researchers are typically expected to have a PhD and significant post-doctoral research experience. At this career stage a researcher is expected to have already made significant research contributions. These may include publications, patents, software development, impact on health policy or practice, technology development or product discovery and development. They will clearly be driving the work (usually evidenced by publications or playing a major role in a large collaborative study) and will be starting to lead their own research (e.g. developing collaborations and networks independently of their current Principal Investigator/supervisor or publishing as the senior author). They will have the research maturity to independently design, manage and lead a creative and innovative research programme and will be starting to develop an international reputation for excellence in their field (e.g. invitations to provide expert peer review or present their work).

**Will more years post-doctoral experience make me more competitive for an International Training Fellowship?**

Not necessarily. You should apply for the fellowship that most closely matches your experience. It is expected that if you have more years of post-doctoral experience you will have achieved more, be more independent and have a more developed research vision. Therefore, we will always assess your track record relative to your experience. However, we will take career-breaks, changes of discipline or area and part-time working into account when assessing your progress. Particular attention will be given to your most recent outputs and achievements to evaluate your career momentum and trajectory.

**Examples of successful Training Fellowship applicants**

1. AB is a postdoctoral researcher who finished her PhD 12 months ago. Her PhD was successful and she published two first author papers. She was awarded a travel grant to present her results at an international conference. She learnt many of the key skills required in her field and gained additional experience through a one year post-doctoral position in a different research group, during which she had the opportunity to participate in a governmental working group on health policy. AB has identified a novel research question in her field that she wishes to investigate further. To do so will require additional technical and analytical skills. She has identified key researchers in these areas and arranged to spend time in their laboratories as part of her Training Fellowship.

2. CD completed a degree in biological sciences and then worked as a laboratory technician for 2 years. This sparked his interest in a career in scientific research so he obtained an International Master’s Fellowship. He was awarded his MSc with distinction, and the results of the research project were published. He was also able to present a poster at a national conference. He now wishes to go on and obtain a PhD, and has identified a novel research question within an area related to the topic of his Master’s Fellowship. The research will build on his existing experience but will require additional training in a range of new techniques. He has identified supervisors who will be able to provide the necessary training and has arranged to spend time in their research groups during his Training Fellowship. He will register for a PhD at a local university.

3. EF completed a successful PhD that resulted in several strong papers, including a first author paper that received a lot of interest and featured in the editor’s commentary. She then obtained a competitive 3-year postdoctoral position in the UK working as part of a multidisciplinary research team carrying out a cohort study. The study took longer than expected owing to delays in patient recruitment, and the fellowship was extended by a further 12 months, but by the end of the fellowship the key outputs were published. During the course of her postdoctoral fellowship she developed a new collaboration with a colleague and as a result wished to change the focus of her research. She identified some specific new skills that she would need to acquire in order to be an independent research leader in this area in the future. For the Training Fellowship she planned to move back to a host institution in a low- or middle country and undertake a period of additional training at an institution in the UK.

4. GH completed her medical training and qualified as a paediatrician. She was interested in pursuing a career as a research scientist and obtained a fellowship that allowed her to be involved in two cohort studies. She was an author on three papers, and was able to present a poster at a local conference. She obtained a junior lectureship position and through this has supervised a number of graduate student projects, and has been was able to complete a Master’s degree through study leave. She has established a collaboration with two other local scientists and a scientist in another LMIC country and has identified a novel research question that she could pursue if she had additional technical training. For the Training Fellowship, she will spend time in two of the other research groups, and will register for a PhD at a local university.