**Senior Research Fellowships**

**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 a senior (independent) researcher?**

Independent researchers will have a PhD and substantial research experience and already be leading their own independent research programme. At this career stage a researcher is expected to have previously held independent funding such as project, programme or fellowship support.

Investigators at this level will have led internationally recognised contributions to research that are important, original and have impact. This may include anything from senior author publications and patents to software development, impact on health policy, practice, technology or product discovery and development. They will have or will be developing an international reputation as a research leader in their field. This may be evidenced by markers of distinction such as awards, invitations to present their work, membership of professional bodies, advisory or editorial boards. In addition to scientific leadership, they will be committed to developing and mentoring less experienced researchers.

**I’ve got 10 years post-doctoral research experience. Is a Senior Research Fellowship right for me?**

With 10 years post-doctoral experience we would usually expect you to be ready for a Senior Research Fellowship, however, we recognise that career paths may not always be linear and that not everyone progresses in the same way. Therefore, to determine the most appropriate fellowship you need to establish which career stage most accurately describes your experience. Senior (independent) researchers who have already established their independence should apply for a Senior Research Fellowship. See the definition of a senior (independent) researcher above to see if it describes your experience.

Alternatively, intermediate (early-independent) researchers should apply for one of our other fellowships (see below). Researchers at the early-independent career stage should have significant postdoctoral experience and be ready to lead their own independent programme of research. They will have already made significant research contributions. This may include anything from publications and patents, to software development, impact on health policy, practice, technology or product discovery and development. They will clearly be driving the work (usually evidenced by publications) and will be starting to lead their own research (e.g. developing collaborations and networks independently of their current Principal Investigator (PI)/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 reviews or present their work).

Fellowships suitable for intermediate (early-independent) researchers include: Sir Henry Dale Fellowship, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship - Stage 2 and Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine. Please see the individual scheme pages for details.

For all fellowships your track record will be assessed relative to your experience. We will take career-breaks, changes of discipline or area and part-time working into account when assessing your progress and particular attention will be given to your most recent outputs and achievements to evaluate your career trajectory.

**Will more years of research experience make me more competitive for a Senior Research Fellowship?**

Not necessarily. It is expected that if you have more years of research experience you will have achieved more and be more independent, therefore, we will always assess your track record relative to your experience. Senior Research Fellowships are not aimed at senior post-docs but at investigators that, in addition to substantial research experience, are already leading their own independent scientific programme. They will also have a track record of internationally recognised research contributions and a reputation as a leader in their field. See above for a more detailed description of senior (independent) researchers.

**Examples of successful applicants for Senior Research Fellowships**

1. AB completed a successful PhD and early post-doctoral career. During this period she learnt the key technical skills required in her field. She published several strong first author publications and was recognised as a rising star when she received a Young Investigator award. She was awarded a 5 year internationally competitive fellowship to develop her own independent research programme. This enabled her to establish and lead a small group of one post-doc and two graduate students, and a fieldwork team. She built up a network of international collaborators and initiated new projects for which she obtained additional small grants. Her fellowship was highly successful, producing novel data resulting in important publications that had impact in her field and on which she was senior author. She is recognised as a leader in her field and has been invited to speak at international scientific meetings. In addition to regularly reviewing papers for journals she is a member of the editorial board of a specialist journal.
2. CD completed a very successful PhD that was funded by a small charity. She then returned to clinical training, and obtained a Clinical Lecturer position that enabled her to pursue her clinical and research interests on a 50:50 basis. Once she had obtained her CCT, she applied successfully for a clinician scientist award, which enabled her to develop her skills as a group leader. During this time, she developed new collaborations, published widely and gained markers of esteem that facilitated her application for a senior level fellowship.
3. EF completed a very successful PhD and published important papers including a first author paper that received a lot of interest and featured on the cover of the journal and in the editor’s commentary. After a short post-doc in his PhD lab he worked in industry for a couple of years before returning to a post-doc position in a new field. He developed new techniques and established new technology in the lab while supervising junior staff and graduate students. During this time he contributed to several important papers including first author papers and was joint corresponding author on his students’ work. He was appointed to a fixed term junior lecturer position with teaching responsibilities but in his remaining time he was able to develop his own research ideas and won project grants as the sole principle investigator which enabled him to build his own small team. This independent work was very successful, resulting in important publications that had impact in his field and on which he was corresponding author. He regularly reviews papers for journals and funding bodies and is invited to speak at international scientific meetings. His teaching post does not allow him to focus on his research; therefore, he will be moving to another host institute to take up the senior research fellowship.
4. GH completed a PhD in epidemiology and modelling. This was followed by a postdoctoral position on a large collaborative team project where he worked closely with biologists and clinicians. The project was successful and he contributed to several important papers. To develop his own research vision and expand his skills he obtained a fellowship that allowed him to return to a host organisation in a low or middle income country and design his own study. The study was successful, resulting in some important publications. GH gained experience in directly managing a small team of field workers and research assistants. He was subsequently awarded a 5 year internationally competitive fellowship to develop his own independent research programme. During this period he presented his data at international conferences, and was senior author on several influential papers. He was a co-applicant on three additional grants, and supervised 3 PhD students. He is recognised as a leader in the field and had participated in two national health policy working groups.
5. IJ gained a MB/PhD and then spent a number of years pursuing his clinical training, and lost some research momentum as a result. He therefore applied for an Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF), which enabled him to undertake up to nine months of research over a three year period. He used the research time to gather the preliminary data that formed the basis of a successful application for an early postdoctoral fellowship. Having integrated the remainder of his clinical training into the fellowship, he obtained CCT during its tenure, and obtained an Honorary Consultant Contract thereafter. Having developed a track record in clinical research, and gained an international reputation in experimental medicine, he applied successfully for an intermediate-level fellowship. At the end of the five year period of funding, he opted to consolidate his research outputs, and having strengthened his CV, was in a strong position to compete for a Senior Fellowship.
6. KL attended medical school and gained her clinical training in Europe. Alongside her clinical duties she established a name for herself in public health. She quickly gained an international reputation and was frequently asked to be a speaker at key conferences/symposia. Having relocated to the UK, she obtained GMC registration, entry onto the Specialist Register and an Honorary Consultant Contract. She also embedded herself in an excellent research environment that was willing to sponsor a successful application for a Senior Fellowship.