

Research Fellowships Framework

The School of Biological Sciences aims to attract a diverse community of the very best Research Fellows, supporting them with mentoring, researcher development training and a defined career progression pathway to enable them to flourish and achieve their full potential.

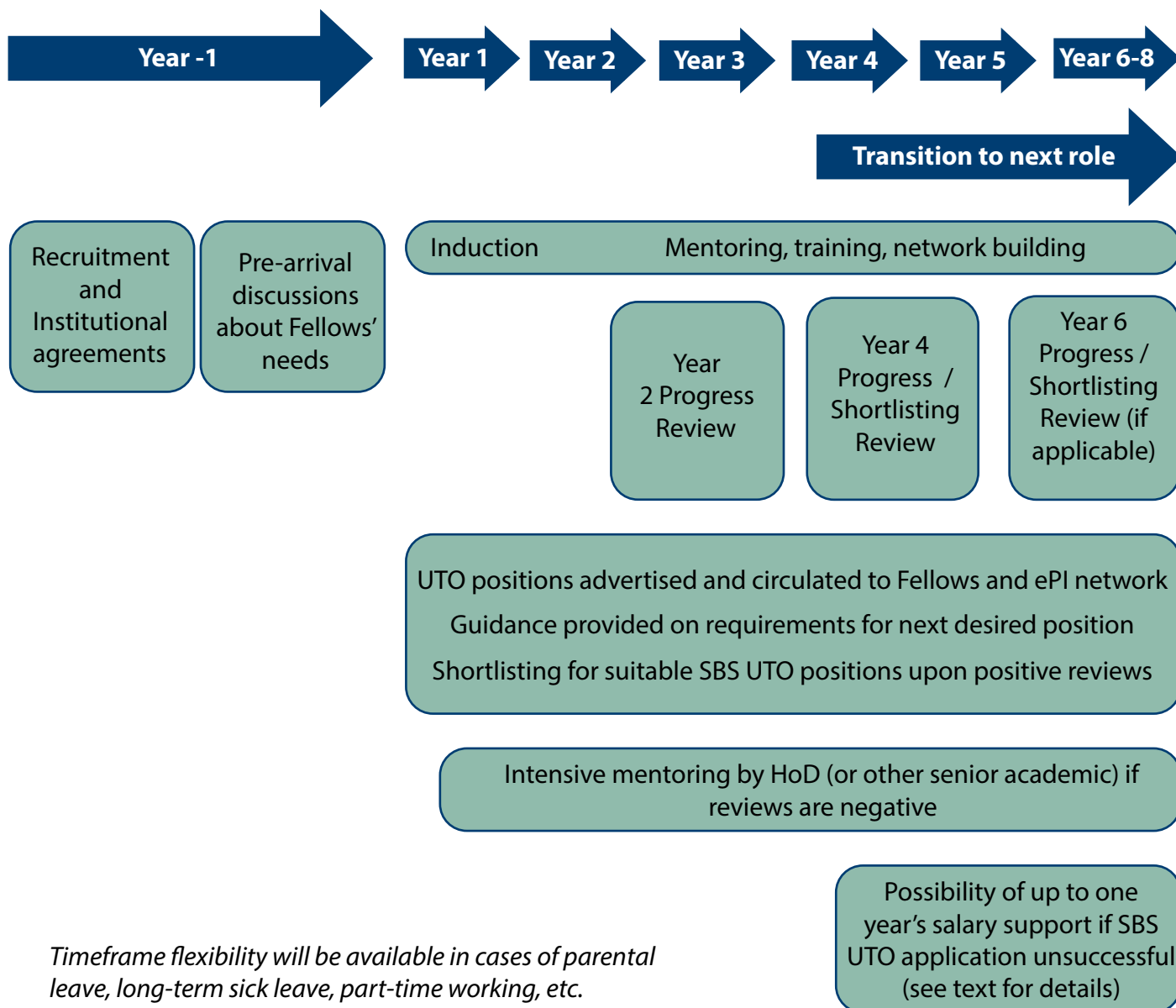
For the purposes of this framework, the term 'Fellow' refers to prospective applicants for mid-career Fellowships of 5 years or longer, who have completed at least one substantial period of postdoctoral research (i.e., Wellcome Career Development Awards, Royal Society University Research Fellowships, UKRI Future Leader Fellowships, NERC Independent Research Fellowships; Heads of Department/Institution will be able to make a case for other comparable Fellowship schemes to be included - see Recruitment section).

For context, over the last 10 years around 25% of Fellows have obtained Cambridge University Teaching Officer positions, 50% have obtained academic positions elsewhere in the UK or around the world, and 25% have moved into clinic, industry or policy/leadership/administration roles. We aim to further strengthen this outstanding track record by enhancing the mentoring, support and career development training our Fellows receive to maximise their opportunities in pursuing whichever career pathway is right for them.

October 2021

Overview of Proposed Institutional Commitment

Fellows will be provided with a tailored package of support aiming to maximise their professional development and competitiveness for their chosen career, including relevant established University Teaching Officer (UTO) vacancies in the School of Biological Sciences (SBS). If a relevant SBS UTO position becomes available, Fellows who apply and meet the essential criteria will be shortlisted for interview if formal progress reviews are positive. Note that it cannot be guaranteed that an SBS UTO position in every Fellow's research area will coincide with the tenure of their Fellowship.



Timeframe flexibility will be available in cases of parental leave, long-term sick leave, part-time working, etc.

The proposed institutional commitment covers three main areas: Recruitment, Fellow Development and Career Progression.



Recruitment

Prospective Fellowship applicants should first approach the Head of the relevant [Department or Institution](#) (HoD/HoI) to discuss whether a Fellowship application can be supported in the context of Departmental strategy. The transparent School-aligned application process for prospective Fellows will be publicised externally using Department websites and/or advertisements placed at a timetable and frequency according to the needs of Departments.

Communications should emphasise diversity and inclusion, and HoDs/HoIs will be asked to demonstrate that they have actively encouraged expressions of interest from underrepresented groups (including, but not limited to, women, BAME, LGBT, disability). HoDs/HoIs will be able to make a case to include in the scheme prospective applicants for Fellowships other than those defined above. All committee members will have undertaken equality, diversity, unconscious bias and DORA training.

A written agreement will be provided to prospective Fellows of what the University can offer if the fellowship is awarded by the funder, in terms of Fellow development/career path; facilities; timelines for specific needs such as animal facilities, special equipment etc.; and expectation of what needs to be provided via grant funding. The agreement provides a basis for two-way discussions during subsequent review/mentorship meetings.





Fellow Development

Will apply to future Fellows and, as much as possible, also to existing Fellows, where practical

Induction

A structured and consistent induction programme via Department and Research Theme will include engagement before arrival to plan the Fellows' needs according to an agreed timeline, ensuring Fellows have access to facilities/support and that research governance requirements can be progressed, including engagement with relevant School and University professional services teams.

Mentoring

Fellows will be supported by a formal one-to-one mentoring programme, paired with one senior academic in their host Department and one from beyond their Department in the same Research Theme. Based on the established [Academy of Medical Sciences mentoring scheme](#), mentors will follow an enabling, non-directive approach to career development support, providing careers advice and guidance, and acting as a signpost to information and resources.

Training

A tailored package of researcher development training will be provided, drawing on the existing [Principal Investigator Programme](#) and [Personal and Professional Development Programme](#), including modules on finding funding, grants management, supportive team leadership, research culture and maximising research impact.

Teaching opportunities

Bespoke teaching opportunities will be introduced, including lecturing, demonstrating, course organization, and examining. Experience gained will help Fellows be competitive for positions in academia and other sectors in Cambridge and beyond, including future UTO positions, and ensure they contribute to Department/School community. The expectation would be no more than 3 hours per week on average during term, with most Fellows teaching considerably less.

Wider University activities

Fellows will be given opportunities by HoD and others to contribute to other aspects of university life, such as committee work, research culture, and outreach. Fellows will also be supported in obtaining an appropriate affiliation (often termed a 'Postdoctoral Research Associateship') with a Cambridge College should they wish, with associated facilities, benefits, teaching opportunities and interdisciplinary contacts. This would be tailored to the interest of the Fellow.

Industry Engagement

Where relevant, Fellows will be encouraged to take up opportunities to gain industry engagement experience, drawing on existing initiatives such as the [Bioscience Impact Team](#) Impact Acceleration Account and Flexible Talent Mobility schemes, the [Cambridge Academy of Therapeutic Sciences](#) Industry Experts in Residence scheme etc.



Career Progression

Progress reviews

A formal progress review process will involve a coordinated School panel at years 2 and 4 (and, if applicable, year 6) comprising relevant HoDs/Hols and Research Theme leads. The timing of reviews can be flexible to accommodate (but not limited to) parental leave, long-term sick leave, part-time working etc. Evaluation will involve assessing performance against requirements for the Fellow's chosen career path, including for a UTO position where that is the desired and potentially realistic outcome (research, teaching, general contribution).

The review will consider, using DORA-compliant indicators, the quality of research outputs (such as publications, datasets, software, collections, influence on policy or disciplinary practices) as well as the track record of collaboration, supportive team leadership and open research practices. It will take into consideration contributions to undergraduate (and, where appropriate, postgraduate) teaching, public engagement and other service where applicable.

Reviews should also focus on extent to which Fellows' needs are being met as set out in pre-arrival written agreement and, if shortcomings are identified, discussion on how they can be addressed. All committee members will have undertaken equality, diversity, inclusion, unconscious bias and DORA training.

Availability of vacancies

When SBS UTO positions are approved for recruitment, advertisements will be publicised to all SBS Departments, Fellows and the SBS early PI Network at the same time as being advertised formally outside the University. Advertisements employing inclusive language will be placed in diverse outlets (e.g., but not limited to, BAME staff network, BBSTEM).

Shortlisting following positive progress reviews

If formal progress reviews are positive, Fellows who apply for suitable SBS UTO position(s), should they become available, and meet the essential criteria, will be shortlisted for interview (for future Fellows and, if possible, existing Fellows). Note that shortlisting does not guarantee selection for the post; most shortlists will likely comprise internal and external applicants, and the most qualified candidate will be selected using fair and transparent recruitment processes. Fellows will also be encouraged to explore academic and research vacancies elsewhere and careers in other sectors.

Unfavourable progress review

If a formal progress review is not positive, intensive mentoring will be provided by the Head of Department (or other senior academic), including open discussion about career alternatives and bespoke career support from a Life Sciences advisor. This process, which may involve difficult discussions, will identify as early as possible if a Fellow is unsuited to their chosen career path, in order to manage expectations, and assist with alternative solutions. Fellows with an unfavourable review retain the right to apply for an SBS UTO position but shortlisting will not be guaranteed.

Fellows will be supported in taking a proactive approach to managing their careers as their Fellowship nears its end. We recognise that not all Fellows will want to, or indeed can, move to a Cambridge SBS UTO position and that a Fellowship in Cambridge offers a world-class springboard for future careers in academia and other sectors across the globe. Fellows will receive mentoring at a suitable time to seek an academic or alternative position, either in Cambridge or elsewhere. The School will endeavour to inform Fellows before their final Fellowship year if it is unlikely that a suitable Cambridge UTO position will be advertised before the end of their tenure, to allow time for the Fellow to secure a position elsewhere. Fellows would be expected to consider applying for any suitable UTO vacancy that becomes available from the beginning of year 4 of their Fellowship onwards.

In unusual cases where the only suitable SBS UTO position becomes available less than a year before the end of a Fellow's contract, the School will endeavour to provide additional support in the event that an application for such a position is unsuccessful, to enable the Fellow to find alternative employment. To this end, where the first suitable vacancy only arises very near or within the last year of their Fellowship, if a Fellow is unsuccessful in this SBS UTO application and receives the outcome within 12 months of the end of their Fellowship, in addition to providing enhanced mentoring, the School will seek to provide funds to extend the Fellow's salary for up to one year from the point of the decision about the UTO position, to help the Fellow transition to a new role. This arrangement is contingent on the funds in the SBS being sustained after the University moves to a new method of resource allocation over the next few years and will come into effect for new Fellows starting in 2022.

Salary support from School funds will be considered only if the decision about a suitable job is made less than one year from the end of the Fellowship, and only following failure to succeed in one (and not subsequent) applications. Extensions will not be considered for Fellows where a suitable SBS UTO position was advertised after three years from the start of their Fellowship, but the Fellow chose not to apply. Flexibility in this policy will be shown under special circumstances such as parental/sick leave, on a case by case basis, but any no-cost extensions to Fellowship end dates will not be taken into account.



Scheme monitoring and evaluation

Oversight of Fellowship and projected UTO vacancy numbers will be maintained on an ongoing basis via the School Academic Planning Group. The role of the Academic Planning Group is to support the Council of the School in the strategic planning of academic recruitment, taking into consideration alignment to the SBS academic vision and fit with Departmental research and teaching strategy. The group will maintain overall oversight of the distribution of Fellows and projected UTO vacancies at the Department/Research Theme level, ensuring flexibility is retained by Departments.

Evaluation of this new framework will take place annually to understand how well it is operating. It is possible that, if prospective Fellow numbers significantly exceed projected UTO vacancies across the School, a gathered field approach might be introduced to select the strongest applicants for School support aligned with the academic direction of Departments/Institutes. Further discussion on this point will take place after it is possible to assess how the new framework is working, and Council will need to approve any substantial changes, such as gathered field selection.