

FAQ – Research Software Engineer (RSE) Fellowships

Please note that this document covers questions that are commonly asked by applicants whilst they are preparing their fellowship application. Questions from current fellows regarding the management of their fellowships, can be found on the following webpage:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/skills/fellows/managing/>

Eligibility

Who can apply for this funding opportunity?

The RSE Fellowship scheme aims to recognise the contribution of RSEs that are driving the development of high-quality research software and demonstrating leadership in embedding the vital role of software in disciplinary and institutional research cultures. An RSE Fellowship is a personal award, designed to provide the recipient with the necessary support to contribute to these aims. RSE Fellows are expected to promote the widespread use of computation and software best practice to enhance research and further develop sustainable RSE career pathways.

Further information of the RSE role can be found at the following link: <https://society-rse.org/about/>

Do I have to hold a PhD?

Applicants are expected to hold a doctorate by the start date of the fellowship or to be able to demonstrate equivalent research software engineering experience and/or training.

Do I need to be a researcher or have a current academic post to apply for this call?

No, but you must be able to move into the academic environment as an employee by the start of your RSE Fellowship. Therefore, you must be employed by an eligible institution at the start and for the duration of the Fellowship.

What's the earliest start date for my RSE Fellowship?

You may start the RSE Fellowship from 31 March 2021.

Does the RSE Fellow have to work on one project or in a single department?

The RSE Fellow should have a flexible framework to permit working on multiple projects across disciplines, departments or more widely. They should involve challenging issues and provide innovative solutions. However, where there is capacity to do so, the RSE may wish to focus efforts on a single project that offers several complex or interdisciplinary challenges across various interfaces with a foundation in software development for science

Can I transfer the RSE Fellowship to another institution?

Yes, but you must have the full support of both the institutions involved. The Fellowship must have more than 6 months left to run at the time of the transfer. Please contact EPSRC to consider your options as there are a number of conditions that must be met, in order to be eligible to transfer your fellowship.

If an applicant already has a permanent position (Senior Lecturer) at an institution would that exclude someone from applying for an RSE fellowship?

There are no restrictions in place regarding eligibility of applicants to apply to the RSE call except that they are expected to hold a PhD by the start date of the fellowship or to be able to demonstrate equivalent research software engineering experience and/or training. There are no eligibility rules

based on years of postdoctoral experience or whether the applicant holds a permanent academic position, therefore this researcher would be eligible to apply.

However, please bear in mind that one area the panel will be assessing applications on is whether they meet the aims of this call, one of which is for the host organisation to provide a formal, recognised place in the academic system and long-term contract for an RSE.

Can I apply for a fellowship even though I am not a UK National citizen?

There are no nationality restrictions imposed by EPSRC on who can apply for a fellowship. You will require the support of a UK University and must be resident in the UK.

I have been working in industry since obtaining my PhD; can I still apply for a fellowship?

Applications are welcomed from candidates who wish to re-establish themselves in academia after a career break or other period of absence from active research.

Host Organisation

Can fellowships be held at Research Council Institutes?

Yes. An EPSRC fellowship can be hosted by any organisation eligible for EPSRC funding. To check your eligibility for the Research Institutes and other Independent Research Organisations (IROs), visit the UK Research and Innovation website: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>

Can a fellowship have more than one host organisation?

Fellowships must have one lead host organisation who is their employer. You may work closely with other organisations.

If you have more than one host institution, each institution must be fully signed up to supporting the RSE Fellow, and one 'lead' institution must be identified to hold the award, and this will be your employer. There will be considerable additional challenge in defining a clear programme between more than one centre and you must be aware to fully justify all costs and administrative overheads. You may create other ways of working closely with other institutions.

Time Commitments

Can I apply for a part time fellowship?

Yes – EPSRC fellowships may be held part-time at a minimum level of 50%.

Where you work part time the length of your fellowship can also be extended accordingly (pro-rata)

Where you work full time, but only wish to spend part of your time on your fellowship, the length of fellowship cannot be extended pro-rata. Please note that applicants should not have time commitments that total to more than 100% FTE and therefore if you have other significant commitments (over and above an average of 6 hours per week) you do not wish to relinquish whilst undertaking your fellowship, you should not apply for a full time fellowships.

Can I carry on teaching if I am a 100% FTE fellow?

Provided the teaching is related to the research project on which you are currently working, you may, during normal working hours, undertake teaching and demonstrating work, including associated training, preparatory, marking and examination duties, for up to an average of 6 hours a week (pro rata for part-time staff) calculated over the period that you are supported on the grant.

Funding

Can I submit a fellowship application to different funders at the same time?

If you are submitting fellowship applications to other non UKRI funding bodies in parallel to your EPSRC fellowship application, you should be aware that if you accept an EPSRC Fellowship, where 100% of your time is supported, you will be expected to turn down offers of other similar awards.

Can I apply for other EPSRC/UKRI funding whilst my fellowship is under consideration?

You may apply for other EPSRC/UKRI funding whilst your fellowship application is under consideration but please note any other grant applications should not contain any substantial parts of your fellowship project.

What can the funding be used for?

The normal criteria apply. However, note that there is a restriction on staff to 1 FTE over the period of the Fellowship. The 1 FTE refers to an additional person and is intended to be research staff to support the Fellow, such as a Post-doctoral Research Assistant. Further information may be found in the funding section of the EPSRC website ([Funding guide](#)) and on the Fellowships guidance pages ([Managing your fellowship.](#))

Is there a maximum amount I can apply for?

There is no upper limit to the amount you can apply for on the Fellowship. However, there is a cap on the total amount available for the call (£4.5m) and the number of Fellowships we can fund (4-8). Funds requested must be fully justified in the Justification of Resources (JoR).

Is the Justification of Resources needed at the outline stage?

A JoR is required at the outline stage.

How much is required from the Justification of Resources and the Resource Summary at the outline stage and it is possible to alter these e.g. increase/decrease the budget total between outline and full stages?

The JoR consists of 2 pages of A4. You don't need to give a full justification and accurate costings; just an estimation of costs at the outline stage. Costs may be revised by + or – 10% between the outline and full stages.

In the section "Funding available", on the call the list of activities that can be supported includes both "Their salary" and "Staff of one FTE equivalent for the period of the Fellowship". Does that "staff of one" refer to the fellow themselves, or does it mean an additional person (say, a postdoc) to work alongside the fellow for the period of the fellowship?

The 1 FTE refers to an additional person and is intended to be research staff to support the Fellow, such as a Post-doctoral Research Assistant. The one FTE is for the duration of the Fellowship i.e. 5 years in total and how the applicant would like to split this is up to them.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-Investigators (Co-Is)

Am I allowed a Co-I on my fellowship?

Co-I's are not permitted on RSE fellowships.

As a fellow can I be a PI or Co-I on another grant?

RSE Fellows are eligible to be a PI/Co-I on a research grant, assuming you meet all the other requirements. However, the required resource cannot be duplicated – salary should not be costed to the new proposal for any overlapping period, with the fellowship, estates and indirect costs would need to be reduced accordingly.

Project Partners and Letter of Support

Can resources be requested for project partners, such as cost to cover travel?

Applicants cannot request any resources for project partners as they are supposed to be formally contributing to the project either in cash or in kind. Further details on Project Partners can be found at the following link:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/preparing/writing/lettersofsupport/>

Can a project partner be from the same Research Organisation as an applicant?

Project partners cannot be from the same Research Organisation.

Can I involve industrial or business collaborators in the Fellowship?

Yes, as contributors to the Fellowship, such involvement is encouraged. However, these project partners may not draw funds from the Fellowship, including for travel costs. Named project partners should supply a letter of support describing their contribution, support and commitment to the Fellowship.

Can non-project partners' letter of support be included in the application?

No. Letters of support should only come from named project partners for this call.

Visits and Visitors

Can I go on long visits?

You can spend up to 12 months of the fellowship elsewhere. Although caution would need to be taken with costing (in other words, no estates costs for the period of absence).

For rules on periods of abeyance (in other words, interrupting your fellowship) please see [Managing your fellowship](#).

Can named visiting researchers on a fellowship apply for their own EPSRC Fellowship?

Yes. Although they need to make sure there is no salary duplication if there is an overlap of time spent on different projects. They cannot be Project Partners.

Resources

Would EPSRC pay for staff acting as a supervisor or mentor?

No, we would not pay for staff resource acting in a supervisory or mentoring role.

Should inflation be included in the costs?

Inflation should not be included in fellowship costing, as EPSRC applies indexation at the time of grant announcement. The relevant excerpt from the funding guide states: "Proposals should be made at current (year 1) prices, inclusive of VAT and other taxes, where applicable, with no allowance for inflation."

Please see the [Funding guide](#).

Can Relocation costs be included?

Relocation costs (under Travel & Subsistence) are allowable for fellows (and other named staff on grants) as the Funding Guide states: "Relocation costs may be included for staff who are named in the proposal form. Relocation costs for un-named staff should be found from the Indirect Cost element of the grant."

It would be up to the applicant / host organisation to determine what reasonable cost is in this regard and justify accordingly.

Is there a maximum number of postdocs / technicians I can request when applying for a fellowship?

There is no maximum number of postdocs you can include in your proposal, but they must all be fully justified in terms of the science and resource you are requesting. Note: there is a restriction on staff to 1 FTE over the period of the Fellowship. Further information may be found in the funding section of the EPSRC website ([Funding guide](#)) and on the Fellowships guidance pages ([Managing your fellowship.](#))

Are publication costs an eligible cost on a Fellowship grant?

General publication costs are not allowed, these are to be paid by the host organisation. Universities receive funding from EPSRC to cover researcher's publication costs via a block grant, hence these are not allowable costs on individual grants.