

Introduction

The Pirbright Institute is a world-leading centre for research into viral diseases of farm animals. As part of its long term strategy, we wish to attract and encourage the best scientists to join the Institute to help take forward this important and exciting area of science. In order to help achieve this aim, the Institute has introduced its own Fellowships Scheme to enable outstanding early-stage scientists to develop their own research programme, within the remit of the Institute. The Institute is calling for applications from high-calibre, ambitious, scientists who are able to demonstrate the potential for becoming an established Group Leader.

Background

Progression from a position as a post-doc on an externally-funded (or even core-funded) project to that of an independent Group Leader requires an individual to demonstrate their potential to work independently as a research scientist involving the ability to conceive, plan and deliver a research programme. However, post-docs funded through grants are unable to apply independently for research grants until they hold a tenured position; and they can't have a tenured position until they can demonstrate the ability to win grants!

The transition from post-doc to Group Leader has been dealt with in a number of ways by the Institute in the past. Ideally candidates will have held an externally-funded Fellowship but there are a limited number of fellowships available and such candidates are quite rare. On the whole the Institute has had to evaluate the potential of senior post-docs from their experience to date and take a risk in areas where the post-doc has perhaps not been formally tested. Changes in the rules of some funders, whereby a post-doc can receive recognition for grant applications where they have made a significant contribution to its preparation, helps in this evaluation but does not provide all the answers.

In order to facilitate the transition from post-doc to Group Leader and to develop the next generation of Group Leaders the Institute has created its own Fellowships scheme. This scheme will give the opportunity to a small number of highly motivated and innovative post-docs to demonstrate their ability to win funding and develop their research.

The Scheme

- Eligibility

Applicants must be postdoctoral scientists with no less than two years and typically no more than eight years active\(^1\) postdoctoral research experience at the time of application.

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\(^1\) Active postdoctoral research experience is defined as the period during which applicants have been engaged in paid research after the completion of their PhD studies (not from the actual date their PhD was awarded). In counting only active postdoctoral research experience, allowance is made for periods of maternity/paternity leave, or for those seeking to return to research after a career break.
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• Tenure of award

The Fellowship will be held in association with an existing PIR Research Group but the Fellow will be considered to be independent, new investigator.

The Fellow will be appointed at Grade E on the BBSRC salary scales. The current salary scale at this level is £35,282 - £37,534 per annum.

The Fellowship will be awarded for a maximum of 5 years with performance reviews after 2 and 4 years against the following criteria:

• First Review: It is expected that good progress will have been made in the selected field of research by the second anniversary of the Fellowship with at least one high quality refereed publication published or in press. In addition, it is expected that the Fellow will have submitted at least one research grant application and/or a personal Fellowship application to an external funder, and either had confirmation of funding or at the very least received good referees’ reports. A research grant application should be for a 2-3 year project with research costs, and a Fellowship application should include the personal salary and research costs of the Fellow. These targets must be met for continuation of the Fellowship.

• Second Review: As well as continued good progress in the selected field of research, with at least two high quality refereed publications published, it is expected that by the fourth anniversary of the Fellowship the Fellow will have secured at least one externally-funded, fully costed, 2-3 year research grant and/or a personal Fellowship. These targets must be met for continuation of the Fellowship. It is our expectation that fellows meeting the required standards and in an area of science of high priority for delivery of the Institute’s strategy will become Group Leaders at the end of their Fellowships.

Application Procedure

Applications for The Pirbright Research Fellowships will be considered by the Institute Executive Board. Applications must be submitted to the Pirbright Human Resources Department.

Documentation Required:

Those wishing to be considered for the Fellowship scheme should provide the following documentation:

A completed PIR application form

A 6 page description of the research programme, which must fit broadly with the science strategy of the Institute, to be carried out during the Fellowship and to be proposed in grant and external Fellowship applications. The Fellow will work independently, but in association with an existing PIR research group.

A CV including:

• a list of the Applicant’s publications which should indicate the percentage contribution by the applicant to initiation, execution and writing, and
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- A list of any research grant applications the Applicant has been involved in, which again should show the Applicant’s percentage contribution to their initiation and writing.

A statement outlining their case for the Fellowship

A letter of support from the Institute Group Leader of the research group with whom they wish to be associated

The names and contact details of 3 academic referees

Interviews

Short-listed candidates will be interviewed by a Panel established by the Institute. A 10 minute presentation of the candidate’s research plans will form part of the interview process.

Criteria

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate actual performance or potential in the following areas:

- Depth and breadth of scientific knowledge
- Ability to innovate
- Ability to plan
- Ability to collaborate
- Professional reputation
- Achievements
- Productivity
- Leadership abilities

Value of the Award

The Pirbright Institute Fellows will be appointed to an appropriate point on the Grade E salary scale currently £35,282 - £37,534 per annum

The Fellow will receive:

- A consumables grant of approximately £13,000 p.a.
- Reasonable access to animals for in vivo experimentation (to be discussed and agreed prior to the start of the research programme)
- A travel grant of approximately £1,000 p.a.

Enquiries

If you need clarification on any of the above or have other questions please contact: Professor David Paton Tel: 01483-232-441