



## Fellowship questions

*These are questions from participants who have attended Fellowships Interview session in 2013.*

*Several participants had been though fellowship interviews and have included key questions they faced here.*

*Some questions are project specific but you should be able to adapt these to your own research. If you can add to this list, please send them to me through the contact form.*

*In some cases the questions might alarm you – where this might happen I've annotated them. Remember that employment and equality laws prevent certain questions from being asked – however, I've left them in this document as they were raised and discussed in the sessions.*

*Sample questions – you can use these in your own interview preparation or in mock interviews. However, please don't reproduce without crediting this site.*

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In five years time you are invited to present the plenary lecture at a leading conference. Why?

Why should we fund you over the other candidates?

Can you successfully establish an independent career in your current department?

What will you do if your hypothesis is proven wrong?

What will you do if >insert the thing your research is looking for< are not found?

Where do you hope to be in ten years?

Why do you want to stay in >insert current institution<?

Who are you main competitors?

Why are your publications mainly in smaller journals?

What would you use your year's selection for? (After award is made, the first year is designated for project development and finding a supervisor)

You've got married - would you move? (I'm aware this question is immoral and possibly illegal but it was asked at interview. IF you fear the panel wants an answer to this question even when they can't ask it, make a point of talking about your commitment to the career, support from your family, be explicit about plans – hopefully you won't face this...)

What is ground-breaking about your research?

What sets your research apart from your competitors?

How does your research collaborate with industry?

How do you see your personal life in the next five years? (See above – illegal, but it could be the "elephant in the room")

Why did you choose this group?

What are your measurable outcomes and how will they predict experimental results? (for theoretical/modelling research)

How much do you depend on collaborators and where are they based?

How does your hypothesis link the clinical work with basic science? (Translational project)

How are you different from >insert name of supervisor/close competitors<?

Why should we fund a researcher with so little evidence of producing publications?

What is the timescale for publications in this work?

What will you do if you don't meet these targets? (Research is based on non-verified hypothesis)

These additional questions were added in April 2013 – some were faced by people at recent fellowship and lectureship interviews! Again, thanks to all for sharing their experiences.

*(Lectureship)* What makes you different to our current staff?

What will you be left with if your “plan A” for funding and impact fails?

*(For a candidate who has been in the same institution and group for a long time)* How would you address concerns that your ideas stem from being in a good team rather than being a strong independent individual?

Why did you move from your previous appointment to your current one?

I'm not sure whether your proposal is ambitious or naively over-ambitious. Can you comment?

Whose work has influenced your research interests?

What has changed in your field since your application?

The concept has been raised years before. What makes you think you will succeed where others have failed?

How do you see yourself in 5 (10) years time?

What is the ultimate goal of your career?

Most of your publications are co-authored with your PhD supervisor. How can you defend your research independence?

Why is your citation count so low?

Why do you deserve this fellowship more than the other N candidates?

Your publication list is short given the length of your experience in research. Can you explain this?

What puts you ahead of others?

What is the most important piece of work in your field?

Your work has no measurable impact.

Why should we give you this fellowship?

Your publication record is weak.

Have you got any questions?

Why should we fund research into such a rare disease?

*(The following questions would hopefully never be asked, but the concern behind them might be in the minds of the panel. How would you address this through your answers to other questions?)*

Why should we invest this money on someone working part-time?  
Won't your research outputs appear too slowly for you to compete?

The research you have been involved in to date has been peanuts.  
Why do you think you will be able to bring funding to support your future research?

The research you are proposing to do is unimportant.  
*(The last two are actual questions from lectureship interview - candidate was successful! – he felt this was partly down to not being phased by these appalling questions.)*

What do you think interdisciplinarity is?

What are your personal qualities?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Do you really think this research is worthwhile?

Why do you deserve this fellowship?

What do you do better than the other candidates?

Why did you apply for this funding, knowing that the university is not a leading player in your area?

This proposal has lots of potential, but you don't come across as the right person to take it forwards. Why did you apply for such a position?

There is no value in this research and it should never be funded!

What, for you, is work?

There is no research activity of this type at >institution<. Why start now?

Prof X at >same institution< is researching in your field. Why not just join his group?

Where is the science?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

You don't deserve this level of funding.

A couple of additional links:

<http://www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk>

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips>