

FIRST POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Notes for MCDC PhD students and supervisors

BACKGROUND

The MCDC1 proposal contained provision for about 10 're-entry', first post-doctoral, fellowships of a value of up to \$150,000 open to successful MCDC PhD students on a competitive basis, along the lines adopted for the GMP programme. The form that these awards might take was considered at a meeting of the MCDC Steering Committee in London in May 2012 and again extensively by both the MCDC Steering and Advisory Committees during the MCDC meeting held in Atlanta in November 2012. At the latter meeting, it emerged that the original format might not be the most suitable way of using the funds allocated for the first post-doctoral fellowships. Reasons for considering a change were –

1. There is no guarantee that MCDC will receive funding beyond June 2015 and it has been made clear to the secretariat by the Wellcome Trust that all expenditure related to MCDC 1 must be completed and signed off by that date. This means that the time available for these awards will, in most cases, be for a period of only 12 -18 months. This precludes conduct of a substantial study, such as a clinical trial or complex piece of laboratory research, as past experience has shown that such projects frequently require a no-cost extension.
2. A competitive award of up to 10 awards will leave a substantial number of successful MCDC PhD students without any support during the period immediately after the completion of their PhD when they are trying to establish themselves in a new post graduate career.

For these reasons, the Advisory Committee strongly recommended that a different approach should be adopted for the award of first post-doctoral fellowships and this decision was supported by the MCDC Steering Committee. The nature of the modified scheme, which has been approved by the MCDC Steering Committee, is described below.

A NEW FIRST POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Objectives

The objectives of the MCDC first post-doctoral fellowship programme is to help MCDC PhD students bridge the gap between their PhD studentship and a post-doctoral position in a university or research institution or in a non-academic post, for example a post with an NGO involved in health research, which makes full use of the training that they have received during their PhD fellowship programme.

Eligibility

All successful MCDC PhD students will be eligible for a first post-doctoral award.

Application procedure

Students will be eligible to apply for an award at the time that their thesis is submitted for examination. Some funds could be released following a satisfactory review of the proposal by the reviewing committee before a PhD is awarded but, in general, awards will not be finalised until a student's PhD has been approved by his/her examiners. Three calls for applications will be made in March 2013, Sept 2013 and January 2014. Awards will be for a maximum of 18 months and projects must be completed well before June 2015. Applications should be submitted electronically on a form specifically designed for this programme. The maximum sum for an award will be £50k (\$80k).

Content of the application

The selection committee will be prepared to consider applications covering a wide range of activities provided that a strong case can be made that these will support the candidate in developing an independent scientific career or establishing themselves in a position that makes full use of the training that he/she has received during their PhD fellowship. Examples of requests that might be covered by this programme include –

1. Salary support for a bridging period whilst negotiating a new position, for example a post in a university.
2. Salary support whilst writing up research undertaken during their PhD for publication or completion of a subsidiary study related to the topic of a candidate's thesis but only when it can be demonstrated this work will help in obtaining further support and not as a means of completing work that should have been done during the period of the fellowship.
3. A post-doctoral fellowship at an institution other than the one where the student has undertaken their PhD, including a period abroad if this is appropriate.
4. Undertaking a pilot study that would underpin an application for a more substantial post-doctoral fellowship or research project, possibly with co-funding from another source.
5. A period of further training in an area specifically relevant to a student's future career.

Projects that involve south-south collaboration are encouraged.

Applicants are strongly advised to consult with their supervisor, co-supervisor, MCDC local PI and the head of department /institution in deciding on the potential content of their

application. Evidence of support from the head of department/institution will be required with the application. Each PhD student will be encouraged to join the MCDC mentorship programme at around the time that they submit their PhD and, if a candidate decides to do so, their mentor could also provide help in deciding on an appropriate content for an application.

Award procedure

Applications will be reviewed by the MCDC Steering Committee. Each award will be considered on its individual merits and not as part of a competitive programme. However, awards will only be made when the committee is convinced of their value in furthering a candidate's career. MCDC has no obligation to provide post-doctoral awards to all successful MCDC PhD students. The main features on which the committee will base its decision will be (a) presentation of well thought out plan for the applicant's career during the next year few years (b) a clear explanation of how the proposed programme of work will support this plan.