Parker Derrington Ltd
33 Dovecot Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7LF
T: 07952 154999
E: enquiries@parkerderrington.com
W: www.parkerderrington.com

Getting to Grips with Fellowships

Programme

09:30 .....Fellowships 101
10:00 .....The Key Sentence Technique
10:15 .....What Makes a Good Fellowship Application?
10:45 .....The Magic Formula
11:00 .....Talks and Interviews
12:15 .....Fellowship Criteria
12:30 .....Close

A Project Sales Pitch....SubProjects....Aims and Objectives.....Writing Guidelines.....Elevator Pitch Exercise

Introduction

The workshop is designed to start you thinking productively and pro-actively about Fellowship applications. It starts from the fundamental questions about what fellowships are, why they exist, what is special about people who win fellowships. Then it discusses how decisions are made about fellowships and gets you to think about what you may need to do to turn yourself into a strong applicant and to prepare yourself to apply. It finishes with a homework task that gets you to explore how ready you are to make a fellowship application and what you may need to do to get yourself ready.

My delivery style is interactive, so feel free to ask questions throughout the day. This handout contains all the visual material to be used during the day with clickable links to the main sections in the programme (above) and to the full contents slide-by-slide (below).

Andrew Derrington

Contents

Programme . . . 1
Introduction . . . 1
What is a Fellowship? . . . 2
Who offers Fellowships and Why? . . . 3
What kind of person are they looking for? . . . 3
What Makes a Good Fellowship Application? . . . 3
A good case for support is designed for the decision process. . . . 4
Fellowship Funders are looking for Four Things . . . 4
The Decision . . . 4

The Decision: what information do they have? . . . 5
The Decision: what is the process? . . . 5
Implications of the decision process? . . . 6
The Magic Formula . . . 6
The Key Sentence Technique . . . 6
Key Statements . . . 7
Use Layout to Communicate with Skimmers and Speed-Readers . . . 8
Teach Terminology with Tag Phrases . . . 8
Tag Phrases in Use . . . 9
Tag Phrases in Red . . . 9
Re-cycle Text From Case for Support . . . 10
Resources . . . 10
Principles of short talks and interviews . . . 10
General Principles . . . 10
What is a Good Communication Approach? . . . 11
Principles applied to Talks . . . 11
Slides, Handouts and Scripts . . . 11
Interviews . . . 12
Exercise . . . 12
Take Home Message . . . 12
Marie Curie Criteria . . . 12
Writing Guidelines . . . 13
Sub-projects . . . 14
What should the elevator pitch say? . . . 14
Gathering information for the elevator pitch . . . 15
Writing the Elevator Pitch . . . 15
Sales Pitch for a Project . . . 15
Aims & Objectives . . . 16

What is a Fellowship?

. . .

- Personal support for an individual (The Fellow)
  - How much?
  - For how long?
  - To do what?

. . .

- Research expenses
  - Travel?
  - Slush?
  - Project Funding
    * Equipment?
    * Staff?
    * Research Costs

Who offers Fellowships and Why?

Who? . . .

- Universities
- Research Institutions
- Funding agencies
- Charities

. . .

Why?

. . .

- To develop talent
  - MSCA, Research Councils, Wellcome Trust

. . .

- To attract talent
  - Institutions

. . .

- To steer talent
  - MSCA
  - Discipline-hopping
  - Industry -> Academia

. . .

- To exploit/reward talent
  - Superstar Fellowships

What kind of person are they looking for?

- Exceptional research talent
  - How can you make your talent exceptional?

. . .

- Discuss with your neighbour(s)
  - What are you looking for?
  - What kind of fellowship might provide it?

What Makes a Good Fellowship Application?

Why you need a magic formula.

Andrew Derrington

A good case for support is designed for the decision process.

1. What do funders want to know?
2. How do funders make decisions
   - What are the implications?
   - The Case for Support as Sales Pitch
   - The Magic Formula

Fellowship Funders are looking for Four Things

1. A good PERSON

- Fellows are future research stars.
  - Potential
  - Achievements
  - Creativity

. . .

- Which of your achievements make you look like a future star?
  - What could you change to make yourself appear more stellar?

. . .

2. A suitable PROJECT
   - As a vehicle for your development
   - As a flagship for the funder.

. . .

3. A suitable PLACE
   - Facilities
   - Mentors
   - Support

. . .

4. A good PROGRAMME
   - New Techniques & Skills for the Fellow (and the Host)
   - Experience
   - Connections

The Decision

- Who decides?
- Committee of successful researchers
  - Very busy people
  - Very successful
    * Have their own grants
    * And research groups
    * And jobs

  - Not knowledgeable about your particular research area.
- Fellowships committees are usually broader than grants committees
- Often it's a 2 stage process
  - Paper then interview
  - Project then person

The Decision: what information do they have?

- Applications
  - Usually a set of 50-100 per meeting.
  - Arrive 3-6 weeks before meeting.
  - Everybody delays reading them as long as possible.

. . .

- Expert referees' reports
  - Written reports with evaluation and score.
  - Usually 2-5 per application
  - Usually arrive before the meeting but often after the applications
  - Often conflicting

. . .

- Designated members' reports
  - Oral report by 2 or 3 members who have read the application.
  - Usually lasts $<$ 5 minutes

The Decision: what is the process?

- Designated members report on the proposal
  - Usually less than 5 minutes
  - Who, what, why, how, outcomes, strengths, weaknesses, summary of referees, how important and exciting, suggested score
  - One person may have to do this for 10 or more grants in a day.
  - Probably based on 30-60 minutes preparation.

. . .

- Discussion by all members of the committee.
  - Even though some of them may be reading it for the first time during the discussion.
    * They will probably have read the summary beforehand.

. . .

- All members in the discussion can influence the score.
  - No matter how little they know.
  - And how little time they have spent reading your proposal.

Implications of the decision process?

- Referees will analyse your case for support in detail but:-
  - Most of the committee won't read it.
  - The ones who do read it probably won't understand it.
  - There will be about 100 other applications.
  - This imposes requirements on the case for support.

. . .

-
- It must make it very clear that your project
  - is important, and
  - will be successful
-
- and it must be easy:-
-
  - To analyse it at a deep level (Referee).
  - To know what's in it by skimming it (Committee Member).
  - For an outsider to understand its importance (Committee Member).
  - To grasp the big picture and remember the details (Designated Member).

. . .

-
- To endow your case for support with these properties you may need a Magic Formula

The Magic Formula

- The Key Sentence Technique
- Key Sentences
- Layout
- Tag Phrases
- Repetition

The Key Sentence Technique

. . .

- Create a skeleton of about ten '*key sentences*' that state the main points of the Case for Support.

. . .

-
  - the overall research goal,
  - what makes the goal important,
  - the sub-goals
  - the sub-projects that deliver the sub-goals

  - etc

. . .

-
- Use the key sentences as an organising framework for writing the Case for Support,

. . .

-
  - Each key sentence is the first sentence of a subsection of the Case for Support
    * Rest of the subsection develops the point

. . .

- Use the key sentences as the Summary

. . .

- and as the Introduction.

. . .

-
- Every Reader gets the same picture, no matter what they read

. . .

-
  - Summary only
  - First few lines of the case for support
  - Every word of the case for support.

The Magic Formula

Key Statements

Fellowship Key Statements Cover Different topics depending on the fellowship

- Outcome
- Institution's Strengths
- Fellow's Strengths
- Importance of Project
- 3 Research Aims and why we need them 'We need to know"
- Project summary
- 3 Research Objectives to deliver Aims "This will tell us"
- Dissemination / Impact
- Developmental Programme (How many parts?)
- Developmental value of Project

. . .

- Start every section with a key statement that summarises it

. . .

- They introduce the detail
  - that convinces the referee /detail reader
- Re-use them in the summary

Use Layout to Communicate with Skimmers and Speed-Readers

- Message on first line of paragraph (ASSERT then JUSTIFY)
  - First sentence of para ASSERTS (topic sentence)
  - Remainder of para JUSTIFIES
    * This is where you cite literature
    * This is how you avoid citing too much literature.

. . .

- White space above each paragraph

. . .

- Readers' eye movements land on blank lines.
  - Speed-readers will read first line of every paragraph.
  - Browsers will only read first lines.
  - Detail readers will know what to expect in each para

Programme

Teach Terminology with Tag Phrases

Sub-goal-1, Sub-goal-2 & Sub-goal-3 Key Sentences

- 'We need to know' + tag phrase because….
- We need to know the relationship between the performance of single neurons and the performance of the whole visual system in order to establish the likely contribution of single neurons to perception.

. . .

Sub-project-1, Sub-project-2 & Sub-project-3 Key Sentences

- 'We will do this sub-project in order to discover' + tag phrase
- We will record single neurons during perceptual tasks and calculate sensitivity functions for neural responses and for task performance in order to characterise the relationship between the performance of single neurons and the performance of the whole visual system.

. . .

- Tag phrases provide meaning - link between aims and objectives
- Use them in headings (make them short enough)
- Key sentences and tag phrases start off messy and long-winded, like these.

. . .

- You have to edit them to make them effective.

Programme

Tag Phrases in Use

The perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We need to know the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1 in order to establish the potential contribution of V1 to perception. The potential contribution can be assessed using a range of perceptual tasks, such as visual pattern discrimination, object discrimination, and motion-detection. For any such task, we can infer the contribution of cortical area V1 to that task from the relationship between the perceptual capabilities of single neurons and the perceptual capabilities of the individual.

This is the start of a sub-section of the background. There will be a couple of pages of text (at least 3 subsections, each with its own heading) between it and the start of the corresponding sub-section of the description of the project, which follows here.

Measuring the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We will measure how neural response varies with stimulus strength during perceptual tasks in order to measure the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1. Stimuli from a set that covers a range of strengths will be presented repeatedly in random sequences under computer control. The computer will record responses during the presentations, and during equivalent periods when no stimulus is presented, for off-line spike sorting and analysis……

Magic Formula

Tag Phrases in Red

The perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We need to know the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1 in order to establish the potential contribution of V1 to perception. The potential contribution can be assessed using a range of perceptual tasks, such as visual pattern discrimination, object discrimination, and motion-detection. For any such task, we can infer the contribution of cortical area V1 to that task from the relationship between the perceptual capabilities of single neurons and the perceptual capabilities of the individual.

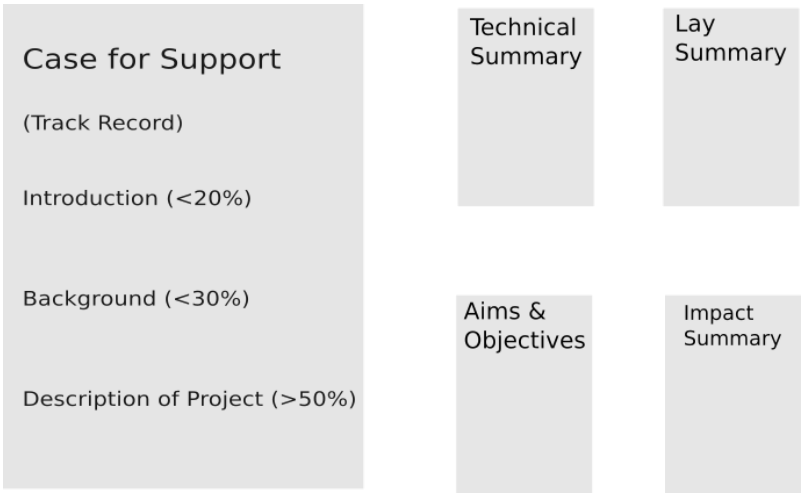
This is the start of a sub-section of the background. There will be a couple of pages of text (at least 3 subsections, each with its own heading) between it and the start of the corresponding sub-section of the description of the project, which follows here.

Measuring the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We will measure how neural response varies with stimulus strength during perceptual tasks in order to measure the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1. Stimuli from a set that covers a range of strengths will be presented repeatedly in random sequences under computer control. The computer will record responses during the presentations, and during equivalent periods when no stimulus is presented, for off-line spike sorting and analysis……

Magic Formula

Re-cycle Text From Case for Support



- Repeat key sentences and tag phrases
  - to provide common structure, and
  - to link
- Maintain structure and order

Programme

Resources

What's been funded?

- Research Council Project Summaries
  - http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk
- ERC Summaries
- Leverhulme Awards 2016

Advice on writing:- www.parkerderrington.com/blog

- How to construct a project
- The key sentences
- Catalogue

Magic Formula

Back to Start

Principles of short talks and interviews

Andrew Derrington

General Principles

- Decide what message you want your audience to take away.

  - Learn it
- Use a good communication approach to deliver that message
  - And Keep strictly to time.
- Be yourself!
  - Or a friendly approachable version of yourself!

What is a Good Communication Approach?

- Remember: It's human-to-human
  - Like your audience - it helps with the body language
- Look at your audience and expect them to look at you
  - Or to shift their gaze and look at what you are looking at
- Tell-Explain-Remind
  - Tell them what they are going to hear
    * Then explain it to them
  - Then remind them what you told them

Principles applied to Talks

- Message size is 1 short sentence
  - Expands into 3 or 4 short bullets

. . .

- Learn the message
  - Then make it the first sentence of your talk
- The body of your talk expands the message into 3 or 4 points
  - Explains each one
- Then draws the conclusion (= the message)

. . .

- And thank the audience
- Don't expect slides or handouts to expand the message
  - No slides is fine
    * And impresses people
  - You can use 'prompt' slides on your phone

Slides, Handouts and Scripts

- Slides
  - Only show slides to demonstrate a point -
  - Must have very clear explanation of
    * What point the slide makes

        * What is on the slide - use a pointer
        * How it demonstrates the point
        * Which point it demonstrates.

. . .

- Handouts
  - Only if teaching.
  - Never to expand the message - write a book!

. . .

- Scripts
  - Never

Interviews

- It's like several short talks with the topics chosen by the panel

. . .

- Prepare answers for the obvious questions
- If you think time is a problem offer a short answer and then say "would you like me to expand on that?"
  - Otherwise tell, explain, remind
- Practise speaking the short answers.
- Look mostly at the questioner but also at the chair and the other members of the panel

Exercise

- Imagine you are in an interview. The first question is "Would you tell us why you have applied for this fellowship?"
  - Write an answer in one sentence. . . .
- Compare notes with your neighbour.

Take Home Message

. . .

- Work out your message - and learn it
- Communicate it Human to Human
- Don't exceed your time

Thank you

Marie Curie Criteria

- Excellence 50%
  - Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)

  - Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host
  - Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution
  - Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence

. . .

- Impact 30%
  - Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher
  - Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the action results
  - Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the action activities to different target audiences

. . .

- Implementation: 20%
  - Coherence and effectiveness of the Work Plan
  - Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources
  - Appropriateness of the management & risk management structures and procedures
  - Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)

. . .

-
- Discuss with your neighbour the key sentences or headers you would need.

Writing Guidelines

- No Synonyms
  - Pick the best term and use it repeatedly.

. . .

- No Homonyms

. . .

- Always Tell then Explain
- Key statement at the start of every section
- Re-use tag phrases across key statements & in headlines

. . .

- Punchline at top of para (~6 paras per page)
- Start with the 'Topic Sentence' . . .
- Strong Verbs (no adverbs, no nominalisations)

. . .

- Sentences as Short as Possible
  - How short is "as Short as Possible"
  - Health Check

. . .

- Avoid value claims (state evidence instead)

. . .

- Bullet lists good, lists in sentences bad.

. . .

- NIUTEIISPOU

. . .

- – No initialisations unless the expansion is in the same paragraph (or unnecessary)

Back to Programme

Sub-projects

What is a sub-project?

- You break your project into components (sub-projects) to make it easier to explain.
  - The sub-projects can be sequential
  - Or parallel
  - Or even different analyses of the same data
  - The only requirement is they produce different, important outcomes.

. . .

- Each sub-project produces an important outcome
  - Sub-project outcomes match research goals exactly.
    * You use the research goals to structure the background of the case for support.

. . .

- – That way the explainer will give your sales pitch.
  - Because they will have read the background before the description of the project.

. . .

- The perfect number of sub-projects is 3, but 4 is OK.

. . .

- Don't create hostages.
  - Sub-projects that depend on uncertain research outcomes.

What should the elevator pitch say?

- Why is this a good Person?
- Why is this a good project?
  - Direct Outcome?
  - Training Outcome
- Why is this a good place?

Gathering information for the elevator pitch

Ask your neighbour about their project. Try to understand and remember:-

- What will their project achieve?
- Would that achievement be important? Why - objectively?
- Why would they be a good person to receive a fellowship -
  - Get evidence rather than value claims.
- How will the project develop their career?
- Why would their chosen organisation/lab be the best place to hold the fellowship - objectively?

After 5 minutes, change roles and repeat.

Writing the Elevator Pitch

1. Imagine that you are trying to persuade a committee to give your neighbour a fellowship.
   - Write a short statement that will convince them to do so.
   - You have 5 minutes.
2. Imagine that you are trying to persuade a committee to give you a fellowship.
   - Write a short statement that will convince them to do so.
   - You have 5 minutes.

End

Sales Pitch for a Project

- Background/Literature review
  - Explains how 3 research outcomes are really important.
    * You can call these the "AIMS"
    * You can also call them "RESEARCH QUESTIONS"
    * And describe them in "We need to Know" Key Statements

. . .

- Description of Project/Methods/Research Plan
  - Describes the research activities in each of 3 sub-projects and makes it clear that they will produce the 3 important outcomes.
    * You can call these the "OBJECTIVES"
    * And describe them in "This will tell us" Key StatementsS

Back to Programme

Aims & Objectives

. . .

- Nobody is sure what Aims & Objectives mean, so you can hijack them to reiterate the sales pitch.

. . .

- Background/Literature review
  - Explains how 3 research outcomes are really important.
  - Make achieving the outcomes the AIMS
  - You could also couch them in terms of hypotheses or research questions.
- Description of Project/Methods/Research Plan
  - Describes the research activities in each of 3 sub-projects and makes it clear that they will produce the 3 important outcomes.
  - Make the sub-projects the OBJECTIVES.
  - You could also call them Work Packages.

. . .

- The AIMS and OBJECTIVES deliver the sales pitch.
  - Use Tag Phrases so Aims match Objectives
  - Order them so they match the structure and the wording of the case for support.
  - Always try and give both, even if you are only asked for one.

Presenter

Andrew Derrington has in-depth experience of the research funding process. He obtained his first research grant, a Beit Memorial Fellowship for Medical Research, while he was writing his PhD. His research was continuously funded by fellowships, project and programme grants for the next 30 years. He served on research grant committees for The Science and Engineering Research Council, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. His book, *The Research Funding Toolkit*, which he co-wrote with Jacqueline Aldridge, research and enterprise associate in the School of Psychology at the University of Kent, is the definitive guide to grant writing for early career academics and research professionals. It is based on Andrew's analysis of how grants committees make funding decisions.

Andrew has worked in eight Universities including two in the world top ten.

He has also worked as a journalist. Over several years he wrote two successful columns in the Financial Times. *The Nature of Things* covered science - from astrophysics to zoology. *Psych Yourself Up* was a guide to the different psychotherapies available in the UK.

Andrew set up Parker Derrington Ltd in 2013. He now works as a consultant, writing research grant applications and providing strategic advice and training to individuals and organizations.

Testimonials

I had a fantastically useful time attending your recent workshop at Leicester University. Writing the 10 key sentences was a very useful exercise and I have, since, worked on them to discover they are a fab tool for any kind of writing really.

Dr Ranjana Das, University of Leicester

Andrew blends easy authority and extensive experience with humour and approachability. The result is a workshop full of practical, memorable advice on how to compete more successfully for research funding.

Professor Peter Clegg, Institute Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool

I attended one of Andrew's workshops when I was a senior lecturer. The hands on advice about how to structure my applications in a really appealing fashion enabled me to win a grant of nearly ¬£600K the next year. I still implement the advice that I received in that workshop, and pass it down to junior colleagues. I find that Andrew's advice has a high success rate!

Prof Theresa Gannon, University of Kent

I still use the tips you gave me for my successful Wellcome SRF application. Your advice on "12 key sentences" is spot-on and helps people focus on the aspects of the proposal that are critical to success instead of getting bogged down in reams of text.

Prof Mark Baxter, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Andrew's grant-writing workshops teach you how to convince the world that it needs your research. They are the most useful training events I have ever attended. His advice about how to sell the big idea without compromising on the science was critical to the success of our ¬£9.3 million ESRC application.

Prof Julian Pine, University of Liverpool