



A report of the Fellows' College Away Day : 29th February 2024- 1st March 2024

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A fellow was defined as an independent researcher with their own funding and research vision. Currently the Faculty of Health host over 100 Independent Research Fellows and our live fellowship income is in excess of £25M.

This report is the culmination of a full faculty survey and face to face event attended by FoH fellows, aspiring fellows and FoH leadership made possible by Research Culture Funding.

1. Identified problems

Fellows were asked which potential problems they faced. Consistent issues arose across all Schools:

- Not feeling valued
- Role expectations
- Lack of information
- Lack of specific mentorship
- Lack of practical support

2. Proposed solutions

- Establish a Fellows' College
- Representation for the community
- Produce a Fellows' induction pack
- Develop a mentorship programme for Fellows

3. What we need from the faculty

- Support for and recognition of the Fellows' College Committee
- Seat for the Fellows' College on the Faculty Research & Innovation Committee (FRIC) and regular invitations to Faculty Executive Board as and when required (FEB)
- Biannual "Town Hall" meetings attended by Faculty Director of Research & Innovation (FDRI)/ School Directors of Research & Innovation (SDRIs) for Fellow-specific questions
- Collaboration from the Faculty in developing induction procedures
- Support and collaboration in developing a mentoring programme
- Transparency from the Faculty on expectations and support packages including underwritten core funded positions and clarity on the ACP guidelines for fellows.
- Small budget to fund an annual Fellows Research Day and social events

Report of our findings

1. Identified problems

Fellows were asked about challenges they faced. Consistent issues arose across different Schools, Divisions and career stage:

1.1 Not feeling valued

Fellows discussed issues around recognition, visibility, job security and representation. *In contrast, Faculty leadership gave feedback describing Research Fellows as “the research stars of the future”, “the future of research” and to whom Leadership would be “handing over the baton”.*

1.2 Role expectations

Fellows reported difficulties arising from lack of clarity in the expectations of their role and juggling various responsibilities. *Faculty representatives recognised the balance needed to ensure Fellows are not overloaded with activities.*

1.3 Lack of information

Fellows described a lack of information at all stages of their awards in relation to processes, training, managing staff and space allocation.

1.4 Lack of specific mentorship

Fellows at all stages discussed how they had not been able to identify or engage with mentoring programmes targeted for their needs. *Faculty representatives noted it is difficult to align Fellows with the right mentorship, with variation across Faculty due to differences in size of Schools.*

1.5 Lack of practical support

Fellows reported a range of practical issues over the course of their Fellowships, including project management, grant management, use of SAP and career development.

2. Impact of lack of support

Fellows discussed the potential negative consequences of lack of support for Fellows. These themes were echoed in discussions with Faculty representatives:

- Loss of talent as retention drops
- Decline in University reputation globally
- Poor research environment with an impact on REF
- Decreased cross-school and cross-faculty research
- Friction within the University
- Reduced postgraduate research community and support
- Declining research culture

3. Proposed solutions

Fellows were asked to suggest solutions to the problems they identified. Consistent ideas emerged and could be split into four key areas:

3.1 Establish a Fellows' College

Fellows supported establishment of a Fellows' College to form a community of current and aspiring Fellows to foster a sense of belonging, signpost information, and provide a voice. The Fellows' College will be key in providing the other solutions.

3.2 Representation for the community

Fellows will be represented through the Fellows' College committee. The Fellows' College will represent the Fellows to the wider University through a seat at the FRIC and regular "Town Hall" meetings with Faculty.

3.3 Produce a Fellows' induction package

New fellows should be provided with an induction package containing specific training and information, developed in line with the ECRC and Think Ahead.

3.4 Develop a mentorship programme for Fellows

We are aware of initiatives to develop mentoring programmes within the Faculty and the University. We would like to work alongside these to ensure new programmes can provide specific support for Fellows at all stages of their Fellowship journey.

What we need from the Faculty

Successful implementation of the Fellows' College relies on support from the Faculty. Specifically, we believe that we require:

1.1 Support for and recognition of the Fellows' College Committee

To ensure that membership of the Fellows' College Committee does not pose an additional and unrecognised burden on Research Fellows we would ask for administrative support with meetings and workload allocation for Committee members.

1.2 A seat for the Fellows' College on FRIC and invitations to FEB/UECRC

We believe it is vital that Fellows have representation at Faculty and University level meetings to raise awareness of our community's needs and for two-way communication. As research-only staff we contribute to a substantial proportion of the FoH research outputs, income and impact. Thus it is important that we have input into the FoH Research Strategy, facilitated by a seat on the FRIC. The FoH Fellows' College will be important to Early Career Researchers (ECRs) planning to apply for Fellowships, as such we will present our Action Plan to FoH ECR Committees at Faculty (FoHECRC) and University (UECRC) level committees. This will be alongside presenting our Action Plan to the Faculty Executive Board, to ensure attracting and retaining Fellows remains a priority of the FoH.

1.3 Biannual "Town Hall" meetings attended by FDRI/SDRs

The Fellows' College will hold biannual Town Hall events for Fellows, the FDRI, FDO (faculty director for operations) and SDRs. Town Hall meetings will be an opportunity for Fellows to raise concerns with the Faculty and School leadership. Updates from the Fellows' College and our Fellows will also be presented

providing an opportunity for the leadership team to learn about the experiences of our Fellows, providing more breadth than what will be presented from our seat on the FRIC.

1.4 Collaboration from the Faculty in developing induction procedures

We will link with the Research Hubs so new Fellows and people developing Fellowship applications are directed to the Fellows' College. To successfully support our Fellows and enhance Fellowship applications we need to identify the correct community, therefore, the Fellows' College would be informed of new Fellows starting in the FoH. New Fellows will have a welcome meeting with a Fellows' College member, informing them of available resources and contacts. In conjunction with Researcher Development, we will develop a section of the Staff Induction page tailored to Fellows to aid the induction process. 'Aspiring' Fellows will be identified by linking with the Research Hubs, ensuring those applying for Fellowships are supported by the Fellows' College. The Fellows' College will signpost to suitable contacts that can advise on Fellowship-schemes based on known panel members (a database we are compiling) and recent awardees (obtained from Research Hubs).

1.5 Support and collaboration in developing a mentoring programme

We want to ensure that the specific mentorship needs of Fellows are being met, while tying in with existing and developing mentorship schemes. We therefore want to be involved in the development of the Faculty Mentorship programme and to be supported in developing Fellow-specific aspects (pre and post-award) where necessary.

1.6 Transparency from the Faculty on expectations and support packages

To avoid inequity across Fellowships, we believe it is vital that the Faculty is clear about what is expected of Fellows (e.g. regarding career development and core funding) and what support is given to Fellows (e.g. space allocation, academic post and PhD students). Specifically, we need clear guidance on what is required for FoH support (e.g. duration of Fellowship, and/or value of Fellowship). This will also benefit Divisional and School Heads (Deans) in providing clarity in the support they can offer to Fellows (*raised as a challenge by School Heads*). We need a clear process of how to obtain this support (e.g. approval of academic posts by the Staffing Advisory Group prior to application) and an approved costing for matched PhD positions to ensure these are budgeted in advance of the Fellowship award. To attract Fellows to the FoH this should be advertised on the centrally managed, externally accessible TUoS website, similar to the [Faculty of Science](#).

1.7 A small budget to fund an annual Fellows' Research Day and social events

It is important to provide opportunities for Fellows across our Faculty to meet in-person and develop relationships and collaborations. The Fellows' College will facilitate regular coffee mornings to allow for networking which will require no budget. We also propose an annual Research Half-Day (which would require a venue and catering) and two social events across the year. To cover catering and also travel costs for one invited speaker per year, we would like to request a budget of £2,000.