

A high-angle photograph of numerous wooden rowing boats (sculls) lined up on a body of water. The boats are arranged in rows, and their hulls are visible. Some boats have numbers on them, such as 24, 18, 22, 32, 4, and 25. The water is calm, and the lighting suggests a bright day.

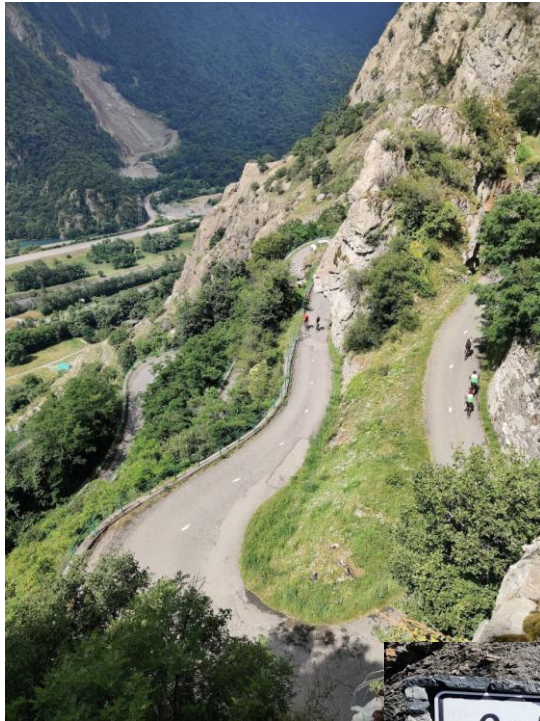
Applying for Research Fellowship Awards: Navigating your way through the valleys of failure and across the peaks of success

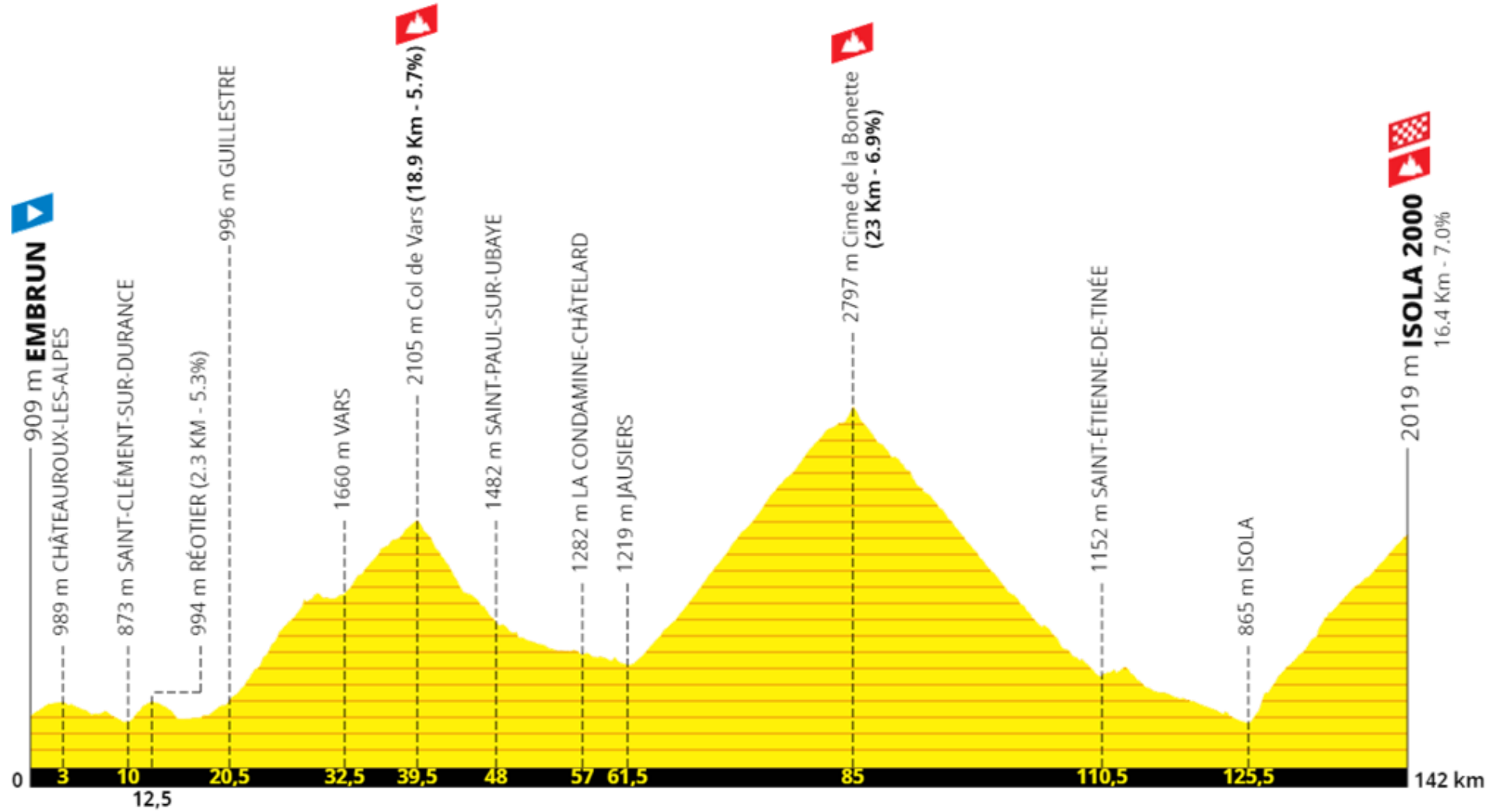
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8 October, 2024

What we'll cover

- About me
- Planning a fellowship application
- Fellowship application dos
- Fellowship application don'ts
- Dealing with feedback
- Preparing for interview
- Should you apply for a fellowship?























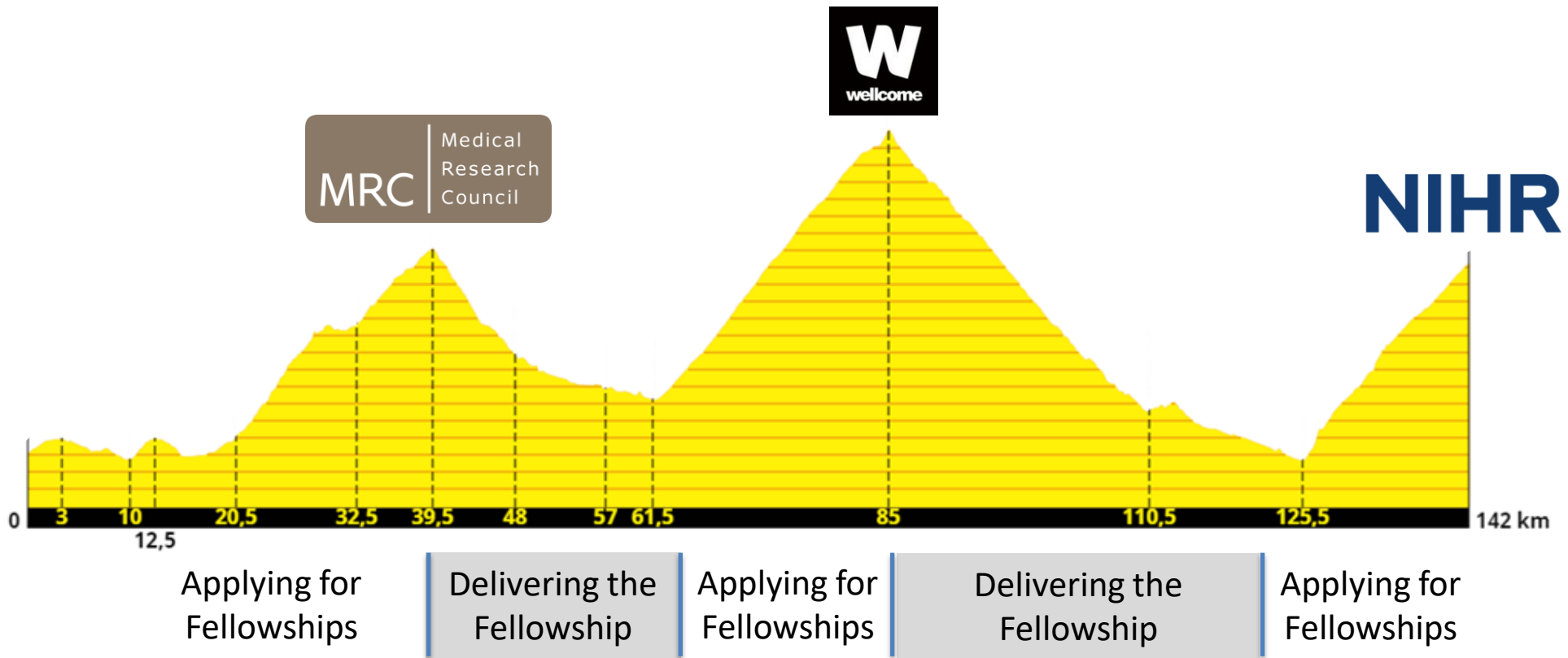
About me

- Undergraduate in Sport and Exercise Sciences 2006
- PhD in Cardiorespiratory Physiology 2010
- First postdoc in Birmingham at Dep of Primary Care
- Moved to Oxford in 2013
- Research interests in:
 - Out-of-office measurement of blood pressure
 - Benefits and harms of antihypertensive treatment
 - Management of hypertension in older adults



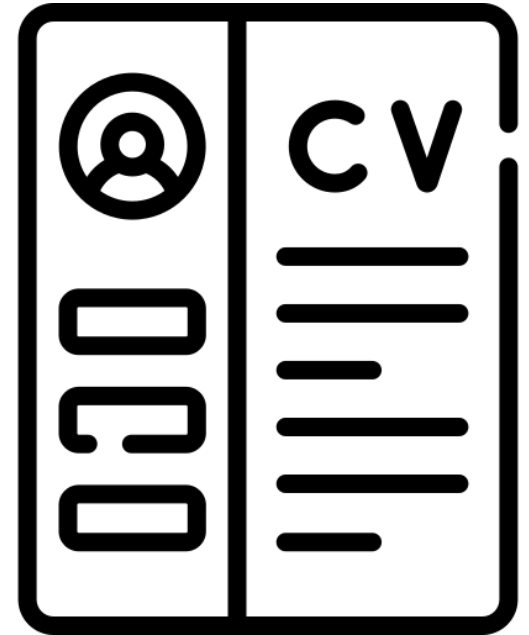
My Fellowship application history

Year	Application 1	Application 2	Application 3
2012	 	 	 
2016	 	 	
2017	 	 	
2023	 	 	



Are you ready to submit a fellowship?

- Your CV is important
 - Evidence of being on a strong upward trajectory
 - Publications - quality over quantity
 - Evidence of small/large grants depending on career stage
 - Think about career development:
(Stats -> qual researcher) or (Stats -> advanced stats)
- Do you have support from your department / supervisor?



Planning a fellowship application

- **Person** – Candidate with a strong track record and positive trajectory
- **Project** – Strong project aligned to funder aims
- **Place** – Host department with a track record of excellence in the field and evidence for supporting career development
- Think about where you want to be in 10 years time
 - Quantitative researcher
 - Specialist skills using electronic health record data
 - Clinical trials



Planning a fellowship application

	Early postdoc	Mid career	Senior
Development stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find my speciality Develop specific methodological skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition to independence Establish a research team Learn advanced research methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop leadership skills Establish international reputation Learn advanced research methods
Development goal	Quantitative researcher and triallist	Specialist in research using big data	Applied health data scientist
Training required	General statistical methods Clinical trials	Prediction modelling Causal inference epidemiology	Leadership training/coaching, advanced AI methods
Supporting project	IPD analysis to develop blood pressure prediction model	CPRD study examining harms of antihypertensive therapy	CPRD study exploring adverse drug events

How to construct a training plan

- What training do you need to achieve this?
 - Look for training opportunities at different institutions
 - Think about personal development (e.g. skills leading a team), methods development (e.g. skills in statistics, qualitative methodologies etc), and implementation skills (e.g. engagement with public, policy etc)
- Look for opportunities to visit other institutions across the country and abroad
- Think about what collaborations could offer value to your fellowship

Planning a fellowship application - costings

- Cost as much staff time as possible (bear in mind career stage)
- Think about what staff you need to build a team
- Think about research costs in the context of funds available and career stage – primary data collection vs trials vs secondary analysis of existing data
- Be specific about training course costs
- Include lots of travel opportunities
- Think about mentoring / coaching costs
- Think about what additional support you can get from your department

Planning a fellowship application - costings

MRC Fellowship (2013)	Wellcome Fellowship (2017)	NIHR Fellowship (2023)
3 years duration	5 years duration	5 years duration
100% FTE for myself	100% FTE for myself for 5 years	75% FTE for myself for 5 years
No additional staff costs permitted	100% FTE statistician for 5 years	100% FTE statistician for 3 years
£16,000 for travel and conferences	£25,000 for travel and conferences	£14,000 for travel and conferences
£7,600 for training courses	£7,200 for training courses	£14,000 for training courses (for myself and my team)
No additional department support	Department support for a PhD studentship linked to the award	Department match-funded the 3-year statistician post and committed to providing me with a permanent position

Fellowship application dos

- Begin planning early – 18 months before deadline
- Think carefully about your future career and how the fellowship help you to achieve this
- Talk about how great you are, to the point that it makes you feel uncomfortable. Funders want to support then next generation of world leading Professors
- Look at other people’s applications and talk to them about their experience
- Make sure your training programme is specific & compliments the research plan
Think about leadership training as you apply for more senior fellowships



Fellowship application dos



- Think of applying for a fellowship as a long, multi-application process
- Find senior colleagues who are willing to support you and nice to work with
- Seek feedback from multiple sources throughout the fellowship process
- Get yourself a mentor (external to your institution), or two! Consider a leadership coach as well

Mentoring

- **A mentor is** an experienced and trusted advisor who has no vested interest in your work and whose only objective is to see you succeed
- **A mentor is not** a collaborator, someone you write papers with or a co-applicant on your grant applications
- Mentors can be within your institution or external to your institution – ideally both!



The screenshot displays the website for The Academy of Medical Sciences. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, About us, Fellows, Policy, Grants and Programmes, Publications, and People. Below the menu, a breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: Grants and Programmes > Programmes > Mentoring". The main heading of the page is "Mentoring". Below the heading is a photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors on a balcony or walkway. The man is wearing a light pink shirt and glasses, and the woman is wearing a blue patterned jacket over a black top. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera.

Fellowship application don'ts

- Don't be too broad – stats, genetics, health economics, big data. Try to keep things simple
- Don't feel you have to move to a different institution to do the fellowship, but.....
- Don't rely too heavily on collaborators in the same institution, particularly if you have been there for a while
- Don't be disheartened by negative feedback



Dealing with feedback



- Sometimes feedback is constructive and helpful, sometimes it is not – seek help from senior colleagues to distinguish between the two
- Dealing with negative feedback is not easy, but it is part of applying for a fellowship and academia in general
- Anticipate failure and come up with strategies to deal with it
- Getting negative feedback does not make you a bad researcher

Feedback from my first NIHR Fellowship app

Experience at doctoral or post-doctoral level appropriate for undertaking proposed research	Uncompetitive
Peer-reviewed publications from research undertaken to date	Uncompetitive
Other output from research undertaken to date	Uncompetitive
Impact of research undertaken to date	Average
Research funding (including travel grants)	Uncompetitive
Evidence of collaborations	Uncompetitive

“Poor candidate and application”

Feedback from my first NIHR Fellowship app

“Do not attempt stats training.”

“The PhD considered only 18 subjects, and did not appear to give a clear comparison with alternative approaches. The statistical presentation is not strong.”

“It is not efficient to train this applicant in statistics in this way; it is questionable whether it would be worth funding an M.Sc in statistics.”

“The statistical analyses would be better done by a competent statistician, in perhaps a month, rather than by a weak social scientist.”

Preparing for interview



- Organise multiple mock interviews with as many people as possible
- Do at least one mock interview face to face
- Ask colleagues to be horrible to you during the interview!
- Think of every possible question you could be asked, write them down and then write down a model answer

Preparing for interview



- Write a script for your presentation and practice it over and over again so that you can deliver it from memory without looking at the slides for prompts
- Think about travel and overnight accommodation
- **Aim to do yourself justice, not be successful in securing the fellowship**

Should you apply for a Fellowship?

- Applying for fellowships is hard, demoralising and preparing for, and going to interviews is particularly horrible!
- Only apply if you are ready – it takes time to build a CV and coherent research plan, especially for the first time
- A fellowship is the best way to progress your career and develop into a independent researcher
- A fellowship provides fantastic opportunities to travel and learn from experts in your field – it is a privilege to hold a fellowship and it will make you a much better researcher and academic

Team Science

Constantinos Koshariis
 Lucinda Archer
 Sarah Lay-Flurrie
 Kym Snell
 Richard Riley
 Richard Stevens
 Richard McManus
 Richard Hobbs
 Ali Albasri
 Miriam Hattle
 Rupert Payne
 Juliet Usher-Smith
 Ami Banerjee
 Andy Clegg
 John Gladman
 Margaret Ogden
 Brandon Bellows
 Jonathan Mant
 Gary Ford
 Jenni Burt
 Mark Lown
 Paul Little
 Sue Jowett
 Marney Williams
 Eleanor Temple
 Ly-Mee Yu
 Jill Mollison
 Julie Allen

