UK Dementia Research Institute

RACE AGAINST DEMENTIA

Race Against Dementia UK DRI Fellowships

Applicant Guidance

1. Overview

Race Against Dementia & UK Dementia Research Institute

Race Against Dementia (RAD) and UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI) have united in our commitment to accelerate the discovery and development of effective treatments for dementia. To mark this partnership, RAD & UK DRI launched an innovative joint AI Fellowship scheme to support the next generation of researchers to drive pioneering, high-impact research, build global collaborations, and transform the lives of those affected by dementia and related conditions, using the latest advancements in AI and machine learning technology.

2. Project Remit

- Strategic priority for this call will be applications which look to develop and apply innovative artificial intelligence approaches to further our understanding of dementia. This may be through furthering knowledge of disease mechanisms, identification of risk factors/markers, or other relevant approaches to improve our understanding of risk, prevention and treatment of dementia.
- Applications which feature multidisciplinary/cross department collaborations are essential.
- Applicants from a mathematics, data science, or engineering background, or who have spent time in industry, are particularly encouraged to apply.
- Applications which include an industrial partner are welcomed – this may include a role as a collaborator, financial or in-kind contributions, and may involve a period of time based at an industrial partner. Partners outside of the typical bioscience sector are particularly valued.
- Inclusion of a secondment at a second organisation, academic or otherwise, is strongly encouraged. Any secondment must take place during the funded period of the Fellowship. Race Against Dementia and UK DRI are supportive of secondment opportunities should they arise post award, this should be discussed with the UK DRI Awards team in the first instance.

3. Scheme Details

Awards of up to £500,000 are available for either four- or five-years duration. The amount and length should be dependent on the proposed project. Key dates:

Call open	Tuesday 14 July 2026
Application deadline	Wednesday 21 October, 4pm
Interviews	March 2027
Outcomes communicated	March 2027

4. Eligibility

4.1. Individual

- The scheme is open to early career researchers with a maximum of six years' postdoctoral experience at the time of application. Applicants with more than the stated period post PhD who have had a career break, undertaken part-time roles, or work outside of active research, are encouraged to contact the UK DRI Awards team to discuss their eligibility.
- Applicants that have not yet been awarded their PhD are eligible to apply. Applicants must be awarded their PhD before the Fellowship commences. A copy of the award certificate will be requested by the UK DRI Awards team at the point of application.
- Applicants are ineligible to apply if they already hold a permanent contract of employment at the proposed host UK DRI Centre.
- There are no residency requirements and international applicants are eligible to apply. The onus is on the host UK DRI Centre to ensure all necessary work permits for the Fellow are in place. Successful applicants who require a visa to work in the UK are eligible to be considered under the fast-track Global-Talent Visa scheme.
- Applications from women, those with disabilities, members of minority ethnic groups, and other groups who are currently under-represented at a senior level in the research and innovation community, are particularly encouraged.
- Applicants do not have to be based at a UK DRI Centre at the time of application; however, Fellowships **must** be held at a UK DRI Centre, including the BHF-UK DRI Centre for Vascular Dementia Research sites at University of Oxford and the UK DRI-Parkinson's Research Centre at University of Edinburgh.
- Applicants must identify a Sponsor/s at a UK DRI Centre to host them for the duration of their Fellowship. Applicants should also identify an independent mentor at their host organisation. (See 8.1 Letters of Support)
- We are supportive of applicants wishing to combine research training with caring responsibilities. Fellowships are available on a part time basis (minimum 0.5 FTE) providing the eligibility criteria are met. Applicants are encouraged to discuss this with the UK DRI Awards team ahead of applying.
- Fellowship holders may spend up to six hours a week (pro-rata for part-time applicants) on other commitments and related activities which will enhance their career development (for example, teaching, demonstrating, peer-review, other funded projects or business-related activities). This time should be protected; opportunities and expectations should be discussed with the Sponsor during proposal development.
- Clinically qualified Fellows can request to spend up to 20% of their time on clinical duties. In such cases, the Applicant may only cost for the proportion of time spent on the Fellowship.

4.2. Sponsor Eligibility

- The applicant must identify a Sponsor at the host UK DRI Centre.

- The Sponsor at the UK DRI Centre is expected to hold a contract of employment at host university (fixed-term or tenure) for the duration of the project. If the Sponsor does not hold tenure, the application must include a Co-Sponsor at the host institution that does.
- The Applicant's research proposal should be distinct from that of the Sponsor, although it is recognised that the work may be complementary to that of the Sponsor and their group.
- The Sponsor/s are required to provide access to facilities needed for the proposed research, provide scientific guidance and to contribute to the training and development of the Fellow.
- The Sponsor and applicant should liaise with the relevant UK DRI Centre Director ahead of applying.
- Additional Sponsors may be included should the Applicant consider their expertise and guidance are required for the successful delivery of the project.
- For secondments to other institutions, which are actively encouraged through this scheme, applications must include a Co-Sponsor from the Visiting Institution and a letter of support from the relevant department. RAD-UK DRI Fellowships aim to be flexible; if opportunities for secondment arise after the start date, Fellows should discuss this with the UK DRI Awards team in the first instance.

5. Application Questions

Please note that if successful certain information from your application will be made publicly available on the Race Against Dementia and UK Dementia Research Institute websites. This includes:

- Title
- Awardee
- Award amount
- UK DRI Centre
- Summary

5.1. Summary – 400 words

This should summarise your proposed research project in a style accessible to members of the public. It should be written in plain English, avoid the use of jargon, and explain any necessary technical terms.

The summary should be non-confidential, if successful the summary will be made publicly available on the Race Against Dementia and UK DRI websites.

5.2. Vision – 500 words

The Vision should summarise what you hope to achieve with the Fellowship. This should describe how the proposed work:

- is scientifically innovative, novel, and ambitious

- has the potential to advance our understanding, or generate new knowledge, of one or more neurodegenerative disease
- has the potential to have transformative outcomes for the field, and how these outcomes will translate to new approaches to diagnose, treat, or prevent dementia
- draws on the unique strength and expertise of the UK DRI. This includes research expertise and infrastructure.

5.3. Research Plan – up to five A4 sides, including figures and references

This should include a comprehensive description of the experimental plan, demonstrating the research:

- is appropriate and relevant to the key objectives outlined in the Vision
- uses a robust, appropriate and transparent experimental methodology. *This should be outlined briefly in the Research Plan and detailed in the Experimental design & Methodology section*
- is achievable in the timeframe. *A Gantt chart, or equivalent, should be used to demonstrate how time will be allocated with key objectives/milestones identified*
- risks to delivery have been identified and appropriate management steps described
- builds on and progresses any relevant previous work.

5.4. Experimental design & methodology – single A4 side, including figures

Applications must include sufficient methodological detail to ensure that experimental design and statistical analysis plans can be properly reviewed.

It is expected that applicants will provide the information detailed in Table 1, the use of figures, tables and diagrams may be used if appropriate.

Guidance is available, including worked examples, on the experimental design information expected from the MRC: Experimental design for animal research: proposal examples

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek support from a statistician/those with relevant methodological expertise to review their proposed experimental design and analysis plan.

For proposals involving the use of animals, applicants are encouraged to consult the free online Experimental Design Assistant developed by the NC3Rs. Please also review section 6. Use of animals.

5.5. Future Impact – 400 words

In this section, applicants should explain how translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts will be maximised for:

- world-leading research and the scientific community
- patients, people with lived experience, and wider society

Applicants should demonstrate they have considered appropriate and innovative approaches to engage the scientific, and the public and patient communities.

Table 1. Experimental Design information

Objective & approach	Specific hypothesis being tested. Brief design details of each major experiment, including the groups being compared.
Sample Size	The proposed sample size per group, along with a clear definition of the experimental and biological units. How the sample size was calculated, showing power calculations and including justification for the effect size chosen. Consider any risks associated with not achieving the sample size required. If power calculations are not appropriate, justify why and provide a principled explanation of the choice of sample size. Explanations based solely in terms of 'usual practice' will be considered insufficient. If using animals, total number in each experiment.
Animal/sample characteristics	Sex of the animals, humans, tissues or cells to be used. If the sex cannot be determined, provide a justification for this. If the use of both sexes if not proposed, provide a justification. Relevant sample information (e.g. species, strain, developmental stage, weight).
Mitigating subjective bias	Masking (blinding) will be implemented or why it is not appropriate. How randomisation will be carried out or why it is not appropriate. How sex will be accounted for in the allocation to experimental groups. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.
Outcome measures and analysis	Outcome measures that will be assessed. For hypothesis-testing studies, specify the primary outcome measure, for example the outcome measure that was used to determine the sample size. Analysis plans, showing that statistical methods are appropriate for the types of data that will be collected. Details of any statistical advice sought/available.

5.6. Capability to deliver

In this section, applicants are required to provide a narrative in the format of the Résumé for Research and Innovation. The purpose of the narrative is to showcase the skills and expertise of the proposed fellow, sponsor, and any collaborators, and how this will help successfully deliver the

proposed project.

In this statement, provide evidence of how you have:

- the relevant experience, skills and expertise (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work.
- the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop other people.
- contributed to developing the modern research environment and wider community.

Applicants may choose to include publications in the written sections. Applicants should provide the context and the impact of the research on the field and beyond.

Further information on this format is provided by The Royal Society and UKRI. Resources to support development of a narrative CV are available in Appendix 2.

5.7. Career development, secondment & training plans – 600 words

Applicants are strongly encouraged to include activities designed to build their collaborative networks during the lifetime of their Fellowship. This may be through building new interdisciplinary collaborations, secondment/s, or other relevant means. Time allocated for these activities should be determined by the Applicant and appropriate to the proposed project. Periods spent with a collaborator or on secondment do not need to be in one discrete period.

Applicants are encouraged to consider collaborations across the bioscience and technology sectors.

Please use this section to describe and justify:

- any proposed collaboration and/or secondment opportunities
- how the opportunities support the outcomes of the proposed project
- the skills and training gained through Fellowship and how these support the Applicant's career development

5.8. Ethics and Responsible Research Innovation – 300 words

If your research will involve human participants, their biosamples (tissues) or data, then you should consider and address any relevant ethical issues in your application. This includes the use of human data and use of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, and the collection of human induced pluripotent stem cells for the purpose of the proposal.

Applicants should demonstrate that you have identified and evaluated the relevant ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations, and how you will manage them. Please refer to MRC's guidance on ethics and approvals for more information.

5.9. Genetic and biological risk – 300 words

Identify the genetic and biological risks resulting from the proposed research, their implications, and any mitigation that will be taken. Please refer to MRC's guidance on ethics and approvals for more information.

5.10. Resources and costs

Applications should not exceed £500k, inclusive of University overheads at the agreed UK DRI Centre rate.

Funds may be used for:

- Salary
- Consumables
- Equipment (under £50k)
- Travel & subsistence - including journeys, workshops and conferences directly related to the research project.
- Visa costs - for the applicant and their family.
- Secondment costs - this includes salary adjustment (where relevant), healthcare, visa and associated travel costs.

It is **not permissible** to include costs for:

- Salary of Group leaders or Affiliate Members
- Studentships
- Article Processing Costs

Exceptions:

If you will be working with collaborators based in different research organisations to the lead applicant, in the charity sector or in industry, they may be eligible certain costs. Please contact the awards team to discuss this ahead of applying: awards@ukdri.ac.uk

6. Use of animals

Applicants are expected to have developed their proposals in accordance with the Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Bioscience Research guidance. You should also refer to the UK DRI Animal Research Policy on the Portal. Should your application propose the use of non-human primates, dogs, cats, equines, or pigs you must contact the UK DRI Awards team ahead of submission: awards@ukdri.ac.uk

Any proposal seeking to use animals must comply with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 2012 (ASPA) and any further embodiments by:

- using the simplest possible, or least sentient, species of animal appropriate.
- ensuring that distress and pain are avoided wherever possible.
- employing an appropriate design and using the minimum number of animals consistent with ensuring that objectives of the proposal will be met.

We strongly advise that applicants consult MRC guidance for applications involving animals ahead of preparing an application. The NC3Rs have 3Rs Resources available to advise on opportunities

and techniques for implementing the 3Rs principles.

An application should ensure their proposal justifies:

- how the knowledge generated will advance the field
- the need to use animals and the lack of realistic alternatives
- choice of species of animals to be used
- type of animal(s), for example, strain, pathogen free, genetically modified or mutant
- sex of the animals to be used in the study and if a single-sex study is proposed, justify why using both sexes is not appropriate or possible in the 'Experimental design and methodology' section

The UK DRI advocates for the sharing and archiving of genetically modified mouse strains as an active 3Rs approach to reduce and refine animal use. New mouse models should be deposited at the MRC Harwell EMMA node at the earliest opportunity. Please contact awards@ukdri.ac.uk for support with this.

6.1. Use of animals overseas

If your application proposes the use of animals overseas, please contact the Awards team to discuss ahead of applying. All named applicants will need to adhere to all relevant national and local regulatory systems in the UK and Internationally. Appropriate approvals from institutional or central animal ethics committees for the experimental protocols will need to be sought prior to release of funds.

6.2. Ethical and welfare standard review

It is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure appropriate Home Office licences are in place to conduct the research. Home Office licences, or amendments, do not have to be obtained prior to application but must be in place prior to animal studies commencing.

6.3. Experimental design, avoidance of bias and statistical considerations

There is a wide range of designs and approaches to animal experimentation that are appropriate depending on the objectives of the research application. In all cases, it is expected that you will provide well justified information in your application concerning the experimental design and its suitability to answering the research questions posed.

While it's recognised that there are ethical requirements to reduce the number of animals used, it is also unethical to conduct a study that, because of its limited size, has inadequate statistical power to robustly answer a research question.

It is important that you give adequate information concerning methodological issues, including (but not restricted to) the information in table 1 Experimental Design information, a number of which are further detailed below:

- where you are using animals in multiple types of experimental approaches in a single application (for example for tissue supply, pilot experiments or more defined preclinical studies) you should provide exemplars for these types of experiment of the sex of the animals you are using, and if you are proposing only a single sex, justification for why the study fits one of the exemption categories outlined by the MRC guidance on sex in experimental design.

- the number of different time points where you will make measurements on each animal
- a description of the statistical analysis methods that you will use, explaining how they relate to the experimental design and showing that they are appropriate for the types of data that you will collect.

7. Data Management

The UK DRI is a data-driven institute. Our researchers are expected to adopt good research practice and act with integrity and transparency in collecting, managing, sharing and (re)using high quality, scientifically robust data.

A Data Management Plan (DMP) that clearly details your project's approach to managing data should accompany your application. When completing the DMP section, it is advised to consult the UK DRI data sharing policy for an overview of the institute's data-sharing principles as well as your University's guidance.

The DMP should describe:

- How your approach to managing data is appropriate for the research project being proposed.
- How the DMP will enable the project's data creation, outputs and storage needs.
- How the plan for data is feasible, sensible, appropriate and valid.

8. Supporting documents

8.1. Letters of Support

Please upload relevant letters of support as a single attachment in PDF format. All letters of support must be dated, signed and on headed paper**.**

Letters of support **must be i**ncluded from:

- Sponsor/s
    - State in what capacity they know the applicant
    - Comment on the potential of the applicant to become an independent scientist
    - Outline what guidance and support they will offer them including the research environment of the department and the facilities and expertise that will be available to the applicant.
- Mentor/s
    - A Mentor is a person who provides guidance to the applicant but is not directly involved in the research. It is a pastoral position, with the Mentor providing the Fellow with support, career guidance and an unbiased opinion.
- Centre Director at **primary** host UK DRI Centre

- State the host UK DRI Centre will guarantee that the Fellow will have access to space and facilities to carry out the project for the duration.
- The letter may also comment on how the applicant will fit into the department and their scientific potential, as well as outlining the research environment of the Centre and the facilities, expertise and support that will be available to the applicant.

If applicable, you may also include letters of support from collaborators based in academia or industry who may be providing scientific expertise, resources and/or training during the award. The letter should confirm the role the collaborator/industrial partner will have in the research including details of any expertise or resources that will be provided.

8.2. Collaborator and intellectual property disclosure form

If relevant, please complete and upload the UK DRI Collaborator and Intellectual Property Disclosure form. This should detail information around Intellectual Property (IP), specifically the background IP that each co-applicant/collaborator will bring to the project and if the work is funded, any IP that may be developed under this project.

9. Assessment Process

In order to maintain the transparency and integrity of the peer review process, UK DRI has adopted the UKRI principles of peer review. Please note the Referee and Panel assessment guidance and scoring criteria are available in Appendix 3. Panel membership will be available on the Portal in due course. An overview of the assessment process is shown in Appendix 1.

All Panel members are required to declare any private, professional or commercial interests that give rise to, or could give rise to, a conflict of interest. UK DRI has adopted as the UKRI conflicts of interest policy.

UK DRI reserves the right to amend the application process. Please note funding decisions are final and not open to appeal.

10. Expectations of award holders

10.1. Terms and Conditions

Awards are subject to existing agreed funding terms and conditions in place with each of each of our partner universities. Information on post award processes, including extensions, suspensions and other processes will be made available in due course.

10.2. Open Access Publishing

UK DRI is committed to immediate, unrestricted online access to published research findings, in line with the UKRI Open Access Policy. This applies to all peer reviewed research articles, reviews (including invited and commissioned) and conference papers funded in full, or in part, by UK DRI (minimum 20%).

As per the UK DRI Open Access Policy, final peer-reviewed research manuscripts must be made freely available to access and download immediately on publication, either via a publishing platform or journal route. No embargo period is permitted.

All publications need to be archived in Europe PMC once the final peer reviewed manuscript is available. This is in addition to any stipulations made by host institutions. Please consult the UK DRI Open Access Policy for more information.

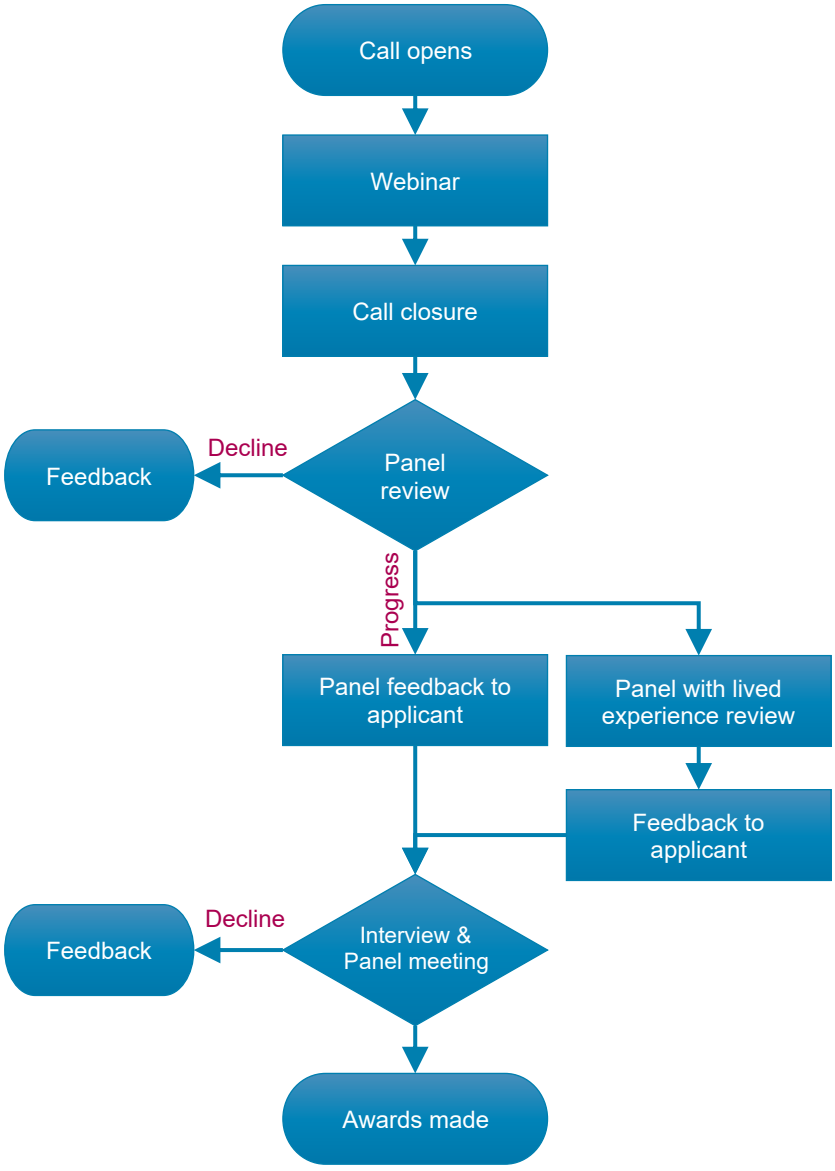
11. Useful Resources

- MRC Policy on Embedding diversity in research design
- MRC Policy on sex in experimental design
- NC3Rs 3Rs Resources
- Experimental Design Assistant (EDA)
- Experimental design for animal research: proposal examples
- Plan to make data work for you: DMPonline helps you to create, review, and share data management plans that meet institutional and funder requirements. It is provided by the Digital Curation Centre (DCC).

12. Questions & Queries

If you have any questions, please contact the UK DRI Awards team: awards@ukdri.ac.uk

Appendix 1. Overview of RAD-UK DRI Fellowship Assessment Process



Appendix 2. Narrative CV Support

A range resources are available online should applicants need guidance with articulating their skills, expertise, track record and network in the 'Capability to Deliver' section:

- Information and guidance on Narrative CVs for researchers writing their own Narrative CV from University of Edinburgh (accessed June 2026)
- Resume for Research and Innovation Guidance from University College London (accessed June 2026)
- Annotated advice and guidance with examples from University of Aberdeen (accessed June 2026)
- Researcher Impact Framework from Trinity College Dublin (accessed June 2026)

Appendix 3. Assessment Criteria

This document is intended as a guide for Panel members to score applications. It is essential that Panel members consider a range of factors when determining the overall score for a proposal.

The score for each should be a whole number between **one** and **five** where one is the lowest score and five is the highest. Proposals with an overall score of 4 and above are considered fundable.

The following table should be used as guidance when determining the appropriate score. The table is not intended to be prescriptive but acts as a general framework.

Descriptors	Score
Exceptional • Highly original, innovative and ambitious science, with robust methodology and design and strong risk mitigation plans. Data management fully considered and appropriate. • Research is timely, addresses a crucial scientific question or knowledge gap important to our understanding, diagnosis or treatment of dementia or neurodegenerative diseases. • Demonstrable impact of project outputs on patients, people with lived experience and wider society. • Excellent value for money, resources appropriate and fully justified. May have demonstrated contributions, financial or in-kind, from other sources. • High potential to become an internationally competitive research leader. Track record of challenging, original and productive research in their area. • Actively contributed to the wider modern research environment and community. • Excellent training plans. Identifies and proactively seeks opportunities for career advancement. • Outstanding environment and access to required resources, highly capable of project delivery. • Demonstratable commitment and support of the Sponsor/s, mentor/s and collaborator/s. Sponsor is strongly invested in success of applicant and project. Mentoring support in place is outstanding.	**5** Fundable
Excellent	**4** Fundable

• Original, innovative and ambitious science, with robust methodology and design. Mitigation plans are clear. Data management well considered. • Research is timely, addresses a scientific question or knowledge gap important to our understanding, diagnosis or treatment of dementia or neurodegenerative diseases. • Impact of project outputs on patients, people with lived experience and wider society. • Excellent value for money, resources appropriate and fully justified. • Strong potential to become an internationally competitive research leader. Evidence of original and productive research in their area. • Record of contributions to the wider modern research environment and community. • Strong training plans. Identifies appropriate opportunities for career advancement. • Strong environment and access to required resources, capable of project delivery. • Clear support of the Sponsor/s, mentor/s and collaborator/s. Sponsor is strongly invested in success of applicant and project. Mentoring support in place is appropriate.	
Good • Methodologically sound study and design. Reasonable likelihood of successful delivery, some concerns with risk mitigation plans. Data management adequately considered. • Research addresses a worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap relevant to our understanding, diagnosis or treatment of dementia or neurodegenerative diseases. • Impact of project outputs on patients, people with lived experience and wider society is requires development/clarity. • Good value for money, resources mostly appropriate and justified. • Potential to become a research leader. Evidence of productive research in their area. • Some limited contributions to the wider modern research environment and community. • Identifies some training opportunities for career advancement. • Reasonable environment and access to required resources, likely capable of project delivery. • Support of the Sponsor/s, mentor/s and collaborator/s. Proposal makes	**3** Not fundable

limited use of existing or new collaborations. Mentorship is unclear.	
Fair • Methodologically weak study, experimental design is underdeveloped. Limited risk mitigation plans, unclear likelihood of successful delivery. Data management partially considered. • Research question potentially useful to our understanding, diagnosis or treatment of dementia or neurodegenerative diseases, but required major revision. • Impact of project outputs on patients, people with lived experience and wider society is unclear. • Reasonable value for money, resources mostly appropriate and justified. • Applicant does not demonstrate the appropriate level of skill and expertise for the fellowship. • Absence of contributions to the wider modern research environment and community. • Limited identification of relevant training has been identified to support career advancement. • Quality of environment and access to required resources is unclear, may be capable of project delivery. • Limited support of the Sponsor/s, mentor/s and collaborator/s. Proposal makes does not make use of collaborations/collaborators are not appropriate. Mentorship is unclear or absent.	**2** Not fundable
Poor • Methodologically weak study, absence of key experimental design information. Absent or limited risk mitigation plans, low likelihood of successful delivery. Data management not considered or significant issues raised. • Research question is poorly defined and relevance to our understanding, diagnosis or treatment of dementia or neurodegenerative diseases, is unclear or absent. • Impact of project outputs on patients, people with lived experience and wider society is absent or unclear. • Resources are inappropriate to deliver the project. • Applicant does not demonstrate the appropriate level of skill and expertise for the fellowship.	**1** Not fundable

• Absence of contributions to the wider modern research environment and community. • Lack of relevant training to support career advancement. • Quality of environment and access to required resources is unclear, may be capable of project delivery. • Poor support of the Sponsor/s, mentor/s and collaborator/s. Proposal makes does not make use of collaborations. Mentorship is absent or unclear.	
Not in remit for funding (for Office use only)	**0**