

# LMS Early Career Fellowships: How to Write a Good Application

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To support early career mathematicians in the transition between PhD and a postdoctoral position, the LMS offers fellowships of between three and six months to mathematicians who have recently or will shortly receive their PhD. This article gives some advice on how to write a good application.

## What is an LMS Early Career Fellowship?

The Early Career Fellowships follow on from the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Postdoctoral Mobility Grants, which ran from 2014 to 2017. In March 2019, 46 applications were considered for the first round of the new scheme and 11 fellowships were awarded.

At least eight fellowships of between three and six months are awarded each year to mathematicians who have recently or will shortly receive their PhD. The award will be calculated at £1,200 per month plus a travel allowance of £800. The fellowships may be held at one or more institutions but not normally at the institution where the fellow received their PhD.

Full details including eligibility criteria, conditions of award and how to apply can be found here: [lms.ac.uk/grants/lms-early-career-fellowships](https://lms.ac.uk/grants/lms-early-career-fellowships).

## Advice on how to write a good application

The first point should go without saying: the applicant should carefully read all the information on the website above before preparing their application.

The proposed project should be explained for a non-specialist reader while, at the same time, it should demonstrate novelty and be of a high mathematical level. Moreover, a good case should be made as to why the proposed host institution(s) make sense and why the fellowship would be transformative. The applicant should also explain how the fellowship fits into their longer term career plans. It helps to be specific where possible. In particular, a clear explanation of the timing of the fellowship in relation to the award of the PhD and to any future position should be given. Note that plans to apply for grants

or positions are more convincing if the schemes or institutions are named and deadlines are given.

A letter of support from an academic host at each institution where the proposed fellowship will be held should be included. In addition to giving the formal assurances required by the guidelines, it would be useful if such letters contained some specific information about the applicant, their work and support for the suggested project.

Applicants with circumstances that make moving impractical should explain these circumstances briefly in the covering letter. Reasons that have been accepted in the past include caring responsibilities and access to specialist medical care.

Students coming towards the end of their PhDs would be well advised to prioritise publishing articles (or at least posting preprints on the arXiv) over other activities. Articles 'in preparation' are less convincing; if they are listed on an application, then it would be useful to indicate the stage of preparation including the number of pages actually written.

Finally, the committee was disappointed that some applicants were let down by their letter writers; the following guide on avoiding gender bias may be useful [tinyurl.com/yyjtqtds](https://tinyurl.com/yyjtqtds).



## Henri Johnston

Henri Johnston is a senior lecturer in pure mathematics at the University of Exeter. He has been a member of the LMS Early Career Research committee since autumn 2017. His main research interests are in algebraic number theory. He enjoys telling really bad jokes, as those who attend his lectures will attest.