**Emerging Innovators Fellowship Introductory Webinar-Transcription**

April 8, 2025, 8:01AM

 **Sykes, Lee** 0:19  
Brilliant, so hopefully everyone can see my screen and just to give a brief welcome and thank you to those of you who are attending our webinar today. My name is Lee, and I am the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager at the Laboratory of Medical Sciences. You may also hear us refer to it as MRC LMS. We are so excited to be launching our new Emerging Innovators postdoctoral fellowship programme that will be hosted with us in London at the LMS. Before we begin, I just wanted to draw your attention to the Q&A feature on Microsoft Teams. You can submit your questions throughout the live webinar by clicking on the two speech bubbles in the toolbar at the top of the screen. We will answer all of your questions at the end of the webinar.  
  
We'll first introduce you to the Laboratory of Medical Sciences and the Black in Biomedical Research Advisory Group who are working together to deliver this really exciting fellowship opportunity. And then we will detail how to apply for this opportunity and answer your questions submitted throughout the webinar.

I will now hand over to Professor Wiebke Arlt, Director of the MRC Laboratory of Medical Sciences, Head of Imperial College's Institute of Clinical Sciences and Honorary Consultant of Endocrinology at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham. To hear more about life at the LMS.  
Thank you, Wiebke.

 **Arlt, Wiebke** 1:50  
 This is just a brief introduction to the LMS for you. The LMS Laboratory of Medical Sciences is one of two National Research Institutes that are funded by the Medical Research Council. Our mission is to understand the mechanisms of disease that affect people, and we are very committed to having a comprehensive look at those areas that are really relevant nowadays. Our priority areas look, for example, at the impact of the environment on health and mechanisms that underlie health. We are committed to looking at the impact of sex differences on mechanisms that underlie health and disease, and we are very interested in the impact of the life course on the development of health and disease. This includes looking at diseases that affect early life, early development before you were born and also in childhood. We also have a major interest in aging and the mechanisms that relate to ageing, like cardiometabolic disease and chronic inflammation. And we are very committed to new ways of working together.  
  
So we are not just a collection of individuals, but the institute is a big team consisting of 35 research groups and in total we have 400 research scientists and operational staff. We have regular whole institute meetings, which are very important to us.  
For this new team science approach, it is important to have people come together from different disciplines, from different perspectives, and different backgrounds.

Diversity is an absolute underlying principle to Team Science. We have several programs, for example, for people who are first in their family to go to university and bring their perspectives into the research. As an institute, we have long-lasting funding to tackle really major questions underlying human health and disease.  
And it is therefore important that we have many different people who bring their unique experience to us, and this is the idea, the underlying idea of the Emerging Innovators Fellowship, really.

The Emerging Innovators Fellowship is for people who have done their PhD in a discipline that is relevant to biomedical research and who are motivated to join us in our fantastic new building on the Hammersmith Hospital campus in West London, where we have all scientific facilities required for absolutely cutting-edge research. We would be excited if you would consider us.

This can be your first or your second postdoctoral experience. When you go to our website, you can see the range of groups we have available. We also encourage research that goes across several themes. So that means you can also pick two, or in some cases people have three, different postdoctoral mentors. We are very much looking forward to this and to your questions. I will now hand over to Amaka.

  
**OFFIAH, Amaka (SHEFFIELD CHILDREN'S NHS FOUNDATION TRUST)** 6:08  
I am Professor Amaka Offiah from the University of Sheffield, and I am a member of the Black in Biomedical Research Advisory Group, which I've been calling BBRAG. But I heard Nic Famer, MRC Race Equality Manager, call it “Brag” last week and that‘s a much easier term to say. Brag was formed to advise the Medical Research Council to help address the under-representation that there is in this country of researchers in the biomedical science field from Black heritage backgrounds to try and improve the number of us with a funding portfolio from MRC and UKRI, and particularly as I say within the biomedical sciences.   
  
The initiative was given £3.7 million over 3 years and it was approved by the MRC Executive Board, Strategy Board and Council. There are approximately 20 members in Advisory Group. \*slide shows members of Brag\* Here we are. I think there are a few names missed off. These are the academics on the BBRAG Advisory Board. We were asked to submit registrations of interest in 2022 and there were more submissions than we had space for. So it is a huge honour to be a member of this group. The additional names are employees of the MRC. Apologies if there is anyone who has been unintentionally missed off.   
  
Brag is co-chaired by Professor Bernadine Idowu and Professor Franklin Aigbirhio. In our meetings, we try and advise the MRC on the EDI-related issues that we face. Obviously, we all have our own lived experiences that we can contribute to the discussion. We want to enhance the MRC's understanding of the activities, particularly within the whole complex landscape of trying to maneuver through academia but trying to maneuver through academia as a person of colour who has experienced overt racism and microaggressions.

We want to offer strategic advice to support the development of evidence-based initiatives. We also have the belief that the types of research that are funded and research ideas would be enhanced by having us Black scientists put forward ideas. It’s a two-way conversation. The MRC representatives on the board feed back to MRC and then MRC feeds back to us via the representatives on the board.

We have seven major objectives and I will just quickly go through them.

* Objective one is to provide opportunities for up-and-coming Black scientists to observe MRC boards and panels and to gain reviewer experience
* Objective two related to funding a pilot conference and summer lab internship for Black students at the University of West London. This is being led by Professor Bernadine Idowu and she has funding for two years to run a summer school this and next summer. This year will be in London but hopefully by next year we will be able to attract students from further afield.
* Objective three is working in partnership with the Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge to develop a fellowship scheme for Black researchers. This was actually put in place slightly before BBRAG was formed and it’s a pilot of two fellows funded across three years to complete their fellowships
* Objective four refers to providing funding for school outreach organisations and that’s focussed on pre-university students. The organisations we’re concentrating on are Leading Roots and In2Science
* Objective five is really an extension of objective three, and it’s essentially today’s event: investigating and expanding the fellowship scheme initially offered at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology to other institutions, in this case, the Laboratory of Medical Science
* Objective six is about developing a proposal for MRC funding to support the James Lind Association and that’s focussed on health inequalities impacting Black communities. It pleases me to say that this was launched last week on the 31st March 2025. It is being spearheaded by Dr Sope Wolffs and Dr Melanie Etti. The launch event itself was chaired by Professor Adebajo. There were about 30 of us present and it was a huge success and very well received. The project they’re concentrating on initially relates to asthma and chest conditions in the Black population.
* Objective seven investigates developing a European version of the highly successful American annual biomedical conference for minoritised scientists. It is wonderful to say the inaugural conference took place from the 31st March to the 2nd April 2025. There has never been an event such as this in this country before, and we had many interesting lectures. Professor Kevin Fenton was there, and gave a wonderful speech.

Really, as you can see, we are doing a lot and that’s why I quite like the idea of calling it “brag”. It’s not that we’re boasting, it’s to say that BBRAG is achieving some wonderful things and hopefully we will be promoting the research portfolios and enhancing your experiences as Black researchers in this country. If you need to make any enquiries, contact [blackinbiomed@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:blackinbiomed@mrc.ukri.org). Nic Famer, MRC Race Equality Manager, who works as part of BBRAG is here today as well and will be able to take and answer your questions from the MRC perspective too. Thank you.

 **Sykes, Lee** 13:39  
And just to echo my thanks to Professor Amaka Offiah. She has taken the time to speak with us today on top of being a Professor of Pediatric Musculoskeletal Imaging at the University of Sheffield, she’s also an honorary consultant pediatric radiologist as well and she has kindly given us her time today to talk about the work she does with BBRAG. Thank you so much for giving us such a stellar introduction- BBRAG is an amazing programme of work.

We’re now going to talk a bit more about the fellowship itself and really show you the nitty gritty of the application process.   
The Emerging Innovators Fellowship is a three-year postdoctoral fellowship opportunity for researchers of Black heritage. As Wiebke mentioned earlier, you may be seeking your first or your second postdoctoral position.  
  
We do ask that you've completed a PhD by March or April of this year, and you should be either UK domiciled or if you aren't UK domiciled, that you have studied in the UK for a degree or a PhD. So for us, the link to the UK is really important. Applicants will be applying to work within one or if in some circumstances if appropriate, across a couple of our research groups. Team Science is really important to us with its spirit of collaboration and we’re very excited to be able to offer that opportunity.   
  
We do have over 30 research groups, so please do go to our website and explore those different groups available and contact us at the e-mail address provided at the end of the slide deck to have an introduction with one of our group leaders. They are very happy to talk to you about their research, so please don't be scared to get in touch.

And here are just some of the benefits that you can expect throughout your time at the LMS \*slide shows full list of benefits\*:

* I really wanted to draw your attention to the bespoke 1-to-1 and group coaching support that will have available for fellows on the Emerging Innovators Fellowship
* Your research consumables are all provided
* Our annual postdoc and institute retreats, which are really great opportunities to network and meet other scientists
* Our excellent holiday entitlements.
* Defined benefit pension scheme

There's a lot of value to becoming a researcher and particularly a postdoctoral researcher with us at the MRC LMS.

Applications opened on the 3rd of April and they'll close to applicants on the 11th of May 2025.  
  
So to complete your application, you'll need to download the submission pack from the LMS Emerging Innovators Fellowship webpage and if you go onto the web page, you'll be able to see it in the dark blue box on the top left of your screen. This details the three documents that you'll need to upload to the application portal. At this point, you can consider contacting us to reach out to any group heads that you're interested in working with, and this will really help you understand how your research could fit into their scientific group to stand you in the best stead when you're submitting your application.  
  
And you'll then complete your application and submit it on our recruitment platform.  
I'll go over this in a little bit more detail in a minute.   
  
A panel will then assess eligible applications and candidates will be shortlisted for an informal pre-interview discussion with their chosen group heads and this will be a very informal conversation to just include ideas about the kind of work that you want to do here, your research journey so far and how you'll fit within the wider scientific group. At this point, each group head will select one candidate to proceed to the project proposal and interview stage.  
  
Those shortlisted candidates will develop a research proposal with their chosen group heads, and this will detail the research that you'd like to conduct with us at the MRC LMS and will form the basis of the scientific presentation that you'll give an interview. More information about this stage will be provided to shortlisted candidates.  
  
The interview will take place at the LMS building in West London, where candidates will be able to meet key contacts at the Institute, see our state-of-the-art laboratories and our excellent building. An online interview option will be made available for candidates who aren't able to travel to come and visit us at the LMS, and at that point, successful candidates will be offered the role and start date will be determined.

\*slide shows image of submission pack\*  
And this is just to show you what the submission pack looks like when you download it from our web page. It's a Word document that contains the three elements that you'll need to submit on our recruitment platform. There are three different places you can download this from, either the web page, the job description, or the fellowship brochure as well, which is hosted on our webpage. You can see that there are three elements that you'll need to submit, so there is the CV, the screening document, and what we are calling the scientific cover letter.  
And please do look at this carefully. It isn't a normal cover letter and this will all be detailed in the submission pack, but just to show you that this isn't a standard cover letter, so please do answer the six questions that are detailed. We've also included examples and prompts about how you might want to answer each of these questions, just to give you a bit of an indicator about the kinds of information that we're really looking for with this cover letter.

And this is just a quick screenshot from our recruitment platform so you can see where you can submit your CV. We do have some details about how to create a scientific CV in our submission pack if that's something that you'd like to follow, but if you have a pre-existing CV, please don't hesitate to use that instead. We aren't picky!  
You can attach your scientific covering letter in the section titled “covering letter” and then your screening documents in the “any other” portion. The screening document is also found in the submission pack.

I'm aware we have thrown a lot of information at you today. You can submit any future questions to us and the e-mail address is provided on the slide there. The email address is [peopleandculture@lms.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:peopleandculture@lms.mrc.ac.uk) and you can also find that e-mail address on our webpage too. Thank you very, very much for joining us today.  
And we hope to read your application soon!

Summary of questions:

1. Will the recording be provided?

Yes, the recording will be made available on our webpage to refer back to. If you do have any issues accessing the recording, please send us an e-mail.

1. Can you submit an application if your submission date for your PhD is September?  
   This depends on your specific circumstances, e.g., when you’d be due to receive your PhD certificate, so do feel free to contact us. We would ideally expect fellows to be starting towards the autumn, so if there's anything that would delay your submission date, it might be quite tricky if you're still waiting to submit or waiting to hear about the status of your PhD. Please send us an email so we can pick this up on an individual basis.
2. How long will the fellowships be funded for?

The fellowships will be funded for three years, initially. As with all of our postdoctoral positions at the LMS, there is a potential to extend this, e.g., if your project isn’t finished, your group would like to fund you to continue, etc.

1. Is there any scope for collaboration with researchers outside of the LMS?  
   So these fellowships are hosted primarily within the LMS, so we would expect your group leader to be an LMS group head. A lot of our researchers do collaborate with other institutes and we do have partnerships with a variety of different universities and institutes globally as well as in the UK. If there was a particular collaboration that you're interested in as part of your fellowship but not the primary group that you'd be working within, then there's definitely potential to explore that, but it will very much be on a case-by-case basis.
2. Can you please confirm where we can get the submission materials?  
   You can find the submission materials on our webpage. The link is here: <https://lms.mrc.ac.uk/work-and-study/emerging-innovators-fellowship/>
3. Are you counting PhD completion as submission of thesis or viva?  
   We need your PhD certificate to confirm that you are eligible for this post.  
   So if you have that by that time you are applying, that will help us process your start date in your application as quickly as possible. If you do have a specific circumstance, please do send us a message and we'll see if it's something that we can we can work with, but this is on a case-by-case basis.
4. If I passed my viva in February, am I qualified to apply?  
   You don’t need to have qualified in between March and April- if you have certain circumstances and you will definitely graduate soon, please apply and contact us. Do not rule yourself out! The decision will be made on the qualifications of the individual and their motivation.
5. How often does this opportunity take place and will it be open to PhD candidates who may want to apply in future?   
   This is the first year that we will be running this fellowship and it will hopefully be the first of many years! So if you are interested in a future cohort, please do get in touch.
6. Can you be contacted for support with the application?  
   We are happy to hear from you and answer any questions that you might have throughout the process.
7. How many applications can I submit?

1 per year- this is for individual applicants.

1. Is there a time limit between passing my PhD and applying for the fellowship?

There is no time limit. This is for somebody looking for their first or second postdoctoral fellowship. You can tell us about any gaps you may have had in your research career in your scientific cover letter.

1. How important is publication record to the application? Could a lower number of publications still be successful?

An application with a lower number of publications could still be successful and we also acknowledge that there is going to be a difference in publication record depending on whether you're seeking your first or your second postdoctoral position. We will also consider other outputs of scientific achievement, so conference presentations for example would be good to write about as well. Often in your PhD, your publication may come out after your PhD is completed. Please tell us about any unpublished papers you are awaiting publication for. Please don’t rule yourself out!

1. What is the actual selection process going to be?

We have a tiered selection process. The first part will be matching the candidate to group leaders and checking the scientific fit is there. Candidates will be shortlisted based on scientific fit and achievement and passion for our science. The second part will be the interview. For details of our application process, check out our webpage: <https://lms.mrc.ac.uk/work-and-study/emerging-innovators-fellowship/>

1. Do you also consider candidates coming from molecular plant sciences or you just focus on biomedical sciences only?  
   We understand that sometimes, people come to biomedical sciences from a variety of backgrounds! Many molecular plant scientists have gone on to perform biomedical research. We need you to be interested in how your science would relate to human health and disease. One of our researchers, Dr Karen Sarkisyan, does work on plant sciences, so do have a look at his research group! His research is also very relevant to human health.