

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships

Guide for Researchers

AHSS Research Facilitation

University of Cambridge

May 2025

Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draft your application using the MSCA template, including the relevant section headings.● Follow the formatting guidelines - page size, font, font size and margins. <p>Top tip: Use the narrowest margins allowed to maximise space. Same goes for paragraph indentations - shorter indents = more space!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Avoid using bold text to highlight intext words and phrases as this detracts from the surrounding text. Reserve bold text for organisational text, such as headings, subheadings or sequences.
Writing Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Write in either the first or third person singular - the only preference is consistency.● Use active language to help sell the project. Saying what you are will do, rather than what you hope/would like to do, is an effective way of instilling confidence in the reviewer.● Avoid jargon and focus on clearly setting out the project plan and implementation. <p>Top Tip: Consider using bullet points to tease out key aims, questions and/or actions.</p>
Organising Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Do as much work for the reviewers as possible. Subheadings are a useful tool for organising the content of the proposal and leading the reviewers through the text. Some examples are: Methodology; Work Plan; Team Structure and Management; Outputs and Dissemination.
Project Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensure that the novelty is clearly demonstrated. Show, don't tell, the reviewer why it's important, who cares, why it is timely and why you are the right person to undertake this project.● Include as many details as possible when setting out your methodology and action plan.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ For example, if you are creating a project website - establish who is going to manage it, who is the intended user, how long is the website going to operate.○ Similarly with outputs, indicate how many, what type, the intended readers and potential publishers.● A Gantt chart is required, but don't leave it until the last minute. It is a useful way to help visualise the project in its entirety and can guide you as you map out your deliverables.
General Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Get as much feedback as possible on your application, from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Your mentor, colleagues in your field, colleagues with experience of the scheme, non-specialists – is anything unclear?○ Read the Evaluation Form - check your application against all the points.● Specific areas to address are outlined in the Programme Guide, include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gender dimension and inclusiveness○ Dissemination and exploitation of research○ Open science● Uncertain about post-PhD eligibility? Use the self-assessment tool for the calculation of the 8-years research experience● Mentorship and supervision is a key aspect of the MSCA. Check out the MSCA Supervision Guidelines to better understand the level of support and engagement reviewers are looking to see from your mentor and host institution.● Environmental sustainability: Read useful tips and guidance

Resources

- [Cambridge University Research Operations Office](#): Latest updates on EU funding and general guidance on applying through Cambridge.
- [MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship website](#)
- [Horizon Dashboard](#): Search for previously funded MSCA projects and information on review panels. Use 'HORIZON-MSCA' as Call ID to view most recent projects.
- [UK Research Office \(UKRO\)](#): Provides information sessions, recorded and written resources
- [Most Common Mistakes](#): A quick guide to avoid the most common mistakes
- [Self-Assessment Eligibility Tool](#): Download this worksheet to calculate research experience
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) produced an [annotated MSCA PF application](#), which is extremely useful. Note: this is for the 2024 call, but most of the guidance remains relevant to the current call.