

Sainsbury Science Management Fellows
Supporting scientists taking MBAs
Applicant guidance notes

Two annual deadlines: April and September

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Introduction

Sainsbury Science Management Fellows

Funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, the Engineers and Scientists in Business Fellowship (ESBF), supports British scientists with high career potential to undertake a full-time MBA course at a major UK business school and become a Sainsbury Management Fellow (SMF).

The programme is focused on improving the UK's ability to commercialise and create economic wealth from its world class scientific research base - recognised as a UK strategic imperative for a prosperous future.

A parallel programme aimed at engineers has been running since 1987 and the intention is to repeat this success with scientists. These recipients have an excellent track record in securing senior management and leadership roles in UK business and launching their own enterprises – making a major contribution to the UK's economic prosperity. Over 40% of SMFs currently hold executive board roles.

Overview

The core aims of the scholarships are:

1. To develop those with scientific training as business and industry leaders and entrepreneurs.
2. To improve the economic performance of UK businesses by providing a resource of highly motivated scientists with business skills.

Applicants must show potential to become leaders in UK industry using science and business, and may only use the award to support the cost of their MBA.

Support

If your application is successful, you'll receive an exceptional package of support, including:

Primary

- £50,000 to support costs associated with undertaking your MBA
- If you have not yet secured a place at one of the approved business schools, ESBF can provide a mentor to assist you with preparing your application.

Additional

- Become a part of the ESBF SMF alumni network of over 400 scientists and engineers.
- The opportunity to support other ESBF programmes, such as the ESBF university enterprise competitions, which run at over 50 UK universities.

Admissibility and Eligibility criteria

Applications can be submitted any time, either with or without a confirmed place at one of ESBF's approved business schools.

Applicants must:

- be UK nationals, intending to reside in the UK after graduation.
- have a first degree in a science or allied technology discipline (see Annex A), preferably a first or upper-second class BSc, MSc, or a PhD.
- be an early-career professional with at least four years of relevant post-degree experience.

Applicant should:

- demonstrate strong business leadership potential and show a strong commitment to the economic development of the UK.

Other factors that are looked upon favourably:

- Demonstrated leadership or clear leadership potential; taken initiative, leadership roles, internships, engaged with management responsibilities.
- Employment achievements. For recent researchers this could include evidence of achievements through company sponsorship and interactions, or internships.

Please note:

- Applicants who have previously applied and were invited for interview are not eligible to reapply.
- Applicants who have previously applied and were not invited for interview may reapply after two years.

Eligible business schools

Full time MBAs at the following Business Schools will be considered for a scholarship:

 The University of Manchester Alliance Manchester Business School	 UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE Judge Business School	 Cranfield School of Management
 Imperial College Business School	 UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD Saïd Business School	 wbs WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
 UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH Business School		 Durham University Business School

Application process

You may apply at any time, whether you have secured a place at a business school or not.

1) Application submission and eligibility assessment

- The applicant submits their application via the NPL website.
- The application is assessed for eligibility.

Outcome:

- If eligible, the application moves forward to the review stage.
- If not eligible, the applicant is notified via email, providing details about why they did not meet the requirements.

2) Application review

- Eligible applications are reviewed by a panel of experts.

Outcome:

- If successful, the applicant is invited to an interview.
- If unsuccessful, the applicant is informed via email, with feedback provided where appropriate.

3) Interview Panel

- Successful applicants are interviewed (45 mins) by a panel of NPL Fellows and SMF alumni to further assess (see below) their suitability for the award. Interviews will be held in May/June and October/November. Interviews will take place, in person, at the NPL.

Outcome:

- If successful, the applicant is recommended for the award.
- If unsuccessful, the applicant is informed via email, with feedback.

4) Awarding process

Successful interviewees are formally notified of their award.

- Applicants who already have a confirmed place at an approved business school will receive an offer letter. The award will be paid directly to you upon submission to us of your confirmed place at an approved business school, and either proof of enrolment (if already enrolled) or proof of payment to the approved business school.
- Applicants without a confirmed place at an approved business school will be given an 'offer in principle,' which remains valid for 12 months i.e. you would need to demonstrate a confirmed place at an ESBF-eligible school within 12 months of the offer in principle being made, otherwise the offer expires. Following your offer in principle, should you choose, you will be connected with an SMF alumnus via ESBF, who will offer mentoring and application support. You will then be able to apply to your chosen business school or schools from the approved list with confidence.

Assessment

In assessing the applications, the panel will consider the following criteria as well as the extent to which the application aligns with the aims and objectives of the award:

- The applicant's leadership and interpersonal skills.
- The applicant's potential to become a future senior manager/leader of UK business or entrepreneur.
- The applicant's potential to make a major contribution to the nation's economic prosperity.
- The extent that the MBA programme will enhance and accelerate the applicant's career.
- The applicant's potential to be a role model/ambassador for scientists in business.

How to Apply

All applications must be submitted via NPL available at <https://www.npl.co.uk/sainsbury-management-fellowships>

The application form has five sections and should take between one hour and one day to complete, depending on whether the applicant has already considered the questions prior to applying. However, the guidance given below may be more detailed, so we recommend you keep this document to hand. The written questions have word limits, which are designed to keep your answers focused and to give you an indication of the level of detail we require.

If you have any questions concerning the application or the online system, please email science-smf@npl.co.uk.

Completing the application form

Please ensure that you have all the necessary documentation when you start completing the application, such as a copy of your CV and statements of support. The application form consists of 5 sections:

1. Applicant details
2. Course details
3. Case for support
4. Marketing
5. Statements of support & declaration

Section 1: Applicant details

Q - Applicant details

Provide your name and contact details including postal address and a telephone number.

Q - Please upload a copy of your passport

Please upload, as a PDF, a copy of your passport personal details and photo page plus the front cover of your passport.

Q - Are you a UK national currently living and residing in the UK?

By ticking this box, you declare your intention to reside in the UK after graduation.

Q - There are two Sainsbury Management Fellowship (SMF) scholarships

(One scholarship is for Engineers, and this scholarship is for Scientists).

Please tick the appropriate box, to confirm that you are applying for the Science SMF scholarship only.

Q - Have you applied before for a SMF scholarship?

I yes, please state when and the outcome (invited to interview, not invited to interview)

Q - Please upload a copy of your CV

Your CV should not be more than three pages long, and should highlight your career history, in particular science-specific activities and educational qualifications.

Q - Referee details

Please provide the names, company, position, and contact details (email and telephone) of two referees who can be contacted prior to interview. Please note, we may not contact referees; we will seek applicants' permission before we do so.

Q - Science sector

Select the broad science category that best describes your area.

Q - Any scientist professional accreditations or affiliations

List any memberships both in the UK and overseas

Q – Please complete the Diversity and Inclusion form

By completing the D&I form will ensure that our recruitment process is fair and inclusive.

Section 2: Course details

Q - Do you already have a confirmed place at an approved business school?

If yes, please select the business school you have an offer with from the drop-down list.

Q - If you have a confirmed place, what is your MBA start date?

Q - Duration of MBA

In years and months please confirm the duration of the MBA you will enrol/hope to enrol onto.

Q - Please confirm the total value of the tuition fees for the MBA you will enrol / hope to enrol onto, and how you plan to pay them.

Include here any other scholarships, employer contributions, own funds etc., you will be using to pay the tuition fees. Please note, this information will not affect your eligibility for the scholarship.

Q – If you have a confirmed place, please upload the acceptance letter from business school

Include a signed acceptance letter from the business school. The letter must:

- Be on business school letterhead.
- Include contact details of the writer.
- Confirm your admission to their full-time MBA programme.
- Have the date your full-time MBA programme started/will start.

Q - If you do not have an offer, please list the business school(s) you are hoping to study at.

If unknown, please leave this question blank.

Q - If you do not have an offer, when are you hoping to start your MBA?

Please note that you will need to demonstrate a confirmed business school place within 12 months of the offer in principle being made.

Section 3. Case for support

Q - How do you meet the criteria for this award?

Why do you feel you are a suitable candidate? Emphasise any key career achievements to date. Where applicable, please refer to any achievements relating to UK science and business. [500-word limit]

Q - Describe a time in your life when you failed and what you learnt from that experience.

What lessons did you learn from this? [500-word limit]

Section 4: Marketing

Q - How did you hear about the SMF programme?

Let us know how you heard about the programme, the information provided will help us improve our communication strategy and will not be seen by reviewers.

Section 5: Declaration

Q - Application declaration

I confirm here and by submitting this application that:

- all information is accurate at the time of submission.
- the ideas presented are my own and not plagiarised or containing IP that is not owned by myself.
- all contributions have been appropriately referenced or credited including the use of any online tools such as AI generative tools used in developing my application.
- I understand that failure to cite and declare references or sources will result in my application being removed from the process.
- I understand that my application and any content including IP shared within will be shared with reviewers as part of our application process.
- I have the express permission of any individuals whose contact details I have shared as part of this application process, to share these details with NPL.

Diversity and Inclusion

NPL is committed to diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all underrepresented groups across science. It is NPL's policy to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged or receives less favourable treatment because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

You will be asked a few diversity monitoring questions to help the NPL monitor and assess our diversity and inclusion policy. It will only be used for statistical purposes with access restricted to staff involved in processing and monitoring the data. No information will be published or used in any way that identifies individuals. NPL will retain personal information as per our [Privacy Notice](#). The information will be treated as strictly confidential, nonattributable and will not be seen by anyone involved in any selection processes. You will need to complete the diversity monitoring section as part of the grant application form but can choose "prefer not to say" as responses. All data collected, processed, and stored by NPL will be retained for 12 months from the date of creation.

Use of generative AI tools in funding applications and assessment

Applicants are fully responsible for all the content presented in their grant applications. The grant process does not penalise the use of generative AI tools, but it is imperative to ensure that the application reflects the applicant's own voice and ideas. It is not acceptable to solely rely on generative AI tools to write the entire grant application from start to finish. While these tools may be used to assist in various aspects, the application must primarily represent the applicant's own work. Applicants must provide clear acknowledgement if they have used generative AI tools in the process of writing their grant applications. This includes disclosing the name of the tool used and describing how it was utilised. The following style should be employed for referencing:

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials for background research, styling, proofreading, etc.

Or,

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials that were included within my final assessment in modified form.

Engineers and Scientists in Business Fellowship (ESBF)

The Engineers and Scientists for Business Fellowship (ESBF) is a registered charity championing the value of business education for engineers and scientists. Its flagship activity is the Sainsbury Management Fellows (SMF) MBA scholarship programme, which awards £50,000 to outstanding individuals to study full-time MBAs at leading global business schools. Founded in 1987 by Lord Sainsbury of Turville, the programme was created to equip engineers with the business skills needed to build high-tech enterprises or reach senior leadership roles in major UK companies. In 2024, it was expanded to include scientists, supporting UK economic prosperity and its global scientific reputation. More than 400 Sainsbury Management Fellows have benefited from this world-class education and now work across sectors including manufacturing, engineering, energy, finance, IT, telecommunications and technology. By combining technical expertise with business acumen, Fellows deliver measurable impact across industry, society and the economy. In addition to the scholarship programme, ESBF works with over 50 universities each year, funding enterprise competitions which help engineering and science students develop business skills early in their careers.

Our funders – The Gatsby Charitable Foundation

In 1967, David Sainsbury set up the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and agreed its first grant – £50 to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. David Sainsbury (now Lord Sainsbury of Turville) has since given Gatsby more than £1 billion to distribute to charitable causes. Gatsby works in areas that David Sainsbury and the Trustees are particularly passionate about and where they believe charitable funding can make a real difference. ESBF is a registered charity that promotes the importance and value of business education for scientists and engineers to improve people's lives and the performance of the UK and global economies. ESBF empowers scientists and engineers to become leaders in UK industry, helps them achieve their full potential and attain career goals, and inspires a passion for business innovation among undergraduate scientists and engineers.

NPL

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) is a world-leading centre of excellence that provides cutting-edge measurement science, engineering and technology to underpin prosperity and quality of life in the UK.

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) has been making world-leading scientific discoveries since it was established in 1900 at Bushy House, Teddington, to 'bring scientific knowledge to bear practically upon our everyday industrial and commercial life'.

Key dates

There are two submission deadlines per year: 30 April and 30 September (4:00 pm GMT).

Applicants must be able to attend the interview to be considered for an award. Interviews will take place in May/June and October/November. Exact dates will be provided in due course.

Contact

If you have any questions about your eligibility, the programme, or problems with your application, please email science-smf@npl.co.uk

Annex A: Science degrees eligible for Sainsbury Science Management Fellows Scholarships

1. Natural sciences
 - Mathematics
 - Computer and information sciences – currently covered by Engineering MBA
 - Physical sciences – Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Astrophysics
 - Chemical sciences - Analytical chemistry, Organic chemistry, Inorganic chemistry, Physical chemistry
 - Biochemistry - medicinal chemistry, neurochemistry, molecular biology, forensics, plant science and genetics
 - Earth and related environmental sciences – Climatology, Meteorology, Geology
 - Biological sciences -Abiogenesis, Computational biology, Conservation biology, Cryobiology, Cytogenetics, Dendrology, Developmental biology, Ecological genetics, Ecology, Embryology, Epidemiology, Epigenetics, Evolutionary biology, Freshwater biology, Generative biology, Genetics, Genomics, Geobiology, Gerontology, Herpetology, Histology, Human biology, Ichthyology, Immunology, Lipidology, Mammalogy, Marine biology, Mathematical biology, Microbiology, Molecular biology, Mycology, Neontology, Neuroscience, Nutrition, Ornithology, Osteology, Paleontology, Parasitology, Pathology, Pharmacology, Photobiology, Phycology, Phylogenetics, Physiology, Pomology, Primatology, Proteomics, Protistology, Quantum biology, Relational biology, Reproductive biology, Sociobiology, Structural biology, Synthetic biology, Systematics, Systems biology, Taxonomy, Teratology, Toxicology, Virology, Virophysics, Xenobiology, Zoology
 - Other natural sciences
2. Engineering and technology – these are covered by Sainsbury Engineering Management Fellows
 - Civil engineering

- Electrical engineering, electronic engineering, information engineering
- Mechanical engineering
- Chemical engineering
- Materials engineering
- Medical engineering
- Environmental engineering
- Systems engineering
- Environmental biotechnology
- Industrial biotechnology
- Nano technology
- Other engineering and technologies

3. Medical and health sciences

- Basic medicine
- Health sciences
- Health biotechnology
- Other medical sciences

4. Agricultural sciences

- Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries
- Animal and dairy science
- Veterinary science
- Agricultural biotechnology
- Other agricultural sciences

5. Social science – NOT ELIGIBLE

- Psychology
- Economics and business
- Educational sciences
- Sociology
- Law
- Political science
- Social and economic geography
- Media and communications
- Other social sciences

6. Humanities – NOT ELIGIBLE

- History and archaeology
- Languages and literature
- Philosophy, ethics and religion
- Arts (arts, history of arts, performing arts, music)
- Other humanities