Media Fellowship Scheme

The British Science Association’s Media Fellowships provide a unique opportunity for practising scientists, clinicians and engineers to spend two to six weeks working at the heart of a media outlet such as *The Guardian*, BBC Breakfast or Sky News.
The Challenge

The jobs of scientists and journalists are different:

- The media have to entertain and inform, working to tight deadlines and judged by readership and audience figures.
- It can take a long time in science to get results and have your success measured by peer review.

We want to:

- increase the amount and quality of science coverage in the media;
- boost the public’s exposure to science as part of everyday life;
- broaden the media’s view and banish stereotypes of who does science, by giving them access to a diverse range of researchers; and
- improve scientists' understanding of how the media works.
How it works

We coordinate 10-15 Fellowships each year. To find highly-skilled researchers, clinicians, and engineers, we run an **open call** across the UK universities who sponsor the scheme. We then match successful applicants to a media host.

After a **training day** in London, scientists are placed with their hosts for **two to six weeks** over the summer. Hosts include *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and the BBC.

In September, the Fellows report from the **British Science Festival** (which this year will be held in Chelmsford, hosted by Anglia Ruskin University, from 8th – 12th September 2020).

In October, the Fellows **present at a stakeholder event** about what they’ve learned, and how they will share their new skills with other scientists when they return to their research and teaching roles.
Aims of the programme

**Engage**
Give scientists confidence to engage with the media

**Bridge the gap**
Between journalists and scientists

**Foster trust**
Tackle mistrust and misrepresentation

**Build understanding**
Between science and society
Media placements include:

- BBC
- Daily Mail
- Londonist
- The Guardian
- Mirror
- Sky News
- BBC News
- Huffington Post
- iNews
- Financial Times
- BBC Wales
Benefits for Fellows and their institutions

“I have developed a new relationship with the Press Office in my university. I am more confident. I have spoken with colleagues about press releases they’ve been working on.”

“I hope that my newly gained, more succinct, style will help with paper and fellowship application writing in the future.”

Media skills

Media Fellows are twice as confident writing about topics outside their research area following their placement.

100% of Fellows rated the skills learned as “very good” or “excellent”.

Confidence

Media Fellows are twice as confident pitching a story to an editor following their placement.

Sharing experiences

86% of Media Fellows interacted with their press office following their placement.

92% Media Fellows interacted with the media following their placement.

Data from evaluation of 2019 Media Fellowships
2019 highlights

• Front-page stories in *the i* and *The Guardian*
• Extensive coverage in *Sky News, Huffington Post, Mirror Online* and *Londonist*
• Over 30 pieces across *BBC News* and *Radio*
Impact of the programme

Developing media-savvy scientists

“So far ten academics from The University have participated in the scheme and each one has reaped the benefits of getting behind the scenes of a major media organisation – turning media sceptics into believers.”

Lindsay Brooke – Press Officer (Faculty of Science) at the University of Nottingham

Investing in researchers’ communications skills

“As the trustee of a charity, biotech board member or council member of the Medical Research Council, proficiency in science communication has consistently been regarded as an asset.”

Dr Ruth McKernan CBE, 1992 Fellow and Former Chief Executive, Innovate UK

Our Fellowship alumni includes:

Prof. Nick Petford (1995), Vice Chancellor, University of Northampton
Dr Ruth McKernan CBE (1992), Former Chief Executive, Innovate UK
Dr Helen Czerski (2005), physicist, UCL research fellow and TV presenter
Hannah Devlin (2006), Science Correspondent, The Guardian
Prof. Tom Crick MBE (2011), computer scientist, Swansea University
Dr Suzi Gage (2013), psychologist, University of Liverpool
Vicky Forster (2014), TED Global Fellow
Prof. Clare Elwell (2018), medical physicist and charity leader, UCL
Supporting Media Fellowships

The Media Fellowship scheme can be tailored to suit your organisation’s needs:

- Institutions who support a Fellowship place can help choose the criteria for selecting who will be awarded the Fellowship.

- Specialised terms and conditions can be added to the nomination process alongside the BSA’s standard rules – we can advise on this as needed.

- Funders can request Fellows to contribute to their organisation’s communications channels (e.g. write an article for your organisations website/newsletter).

As a funder of the Media Fellowship(s), you will receive:

- Logo/branding on promotional and marketing material;

- Logo/branding on the British Science Association website;

- Social media mentions;

- Recognition in press materials (including press releases) about the scheme;

- Change to forge links with media hosts and thereby increase opportunities for future coverage.
Programme costs

Each Fellowship requires an investment of £5,000 and the funding is used to cover:

Media Fellows’ travel and accommodation (during placement, for training events and during the British Science Festival).

Recruitment and promotion for Media Fellows and hosts and for running the application process.

Project management and direct costs of training and support to Fellows on two training days, during the placements and at the British Science Festival.
To discuss the scheme in more detail please contact:

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