

FFLM Fellowship Application Guidance

1. Routes to Fellowship

On 30th April 2009, the Faculty Board agreed on a new route to Fellowship in addition to the original 'procedure A' route. In future 'procedure A' would be regarded as an exception and the Registrar should be contacted in the first instance for applications under this procedure. In addition, the number of years post membership experience has been reduced to 5 years

- 1.1 Candidates for Fellowship will normally self nominate, although they may receive encouragement and support from Fellows to do so.
- 1.2 Candidates submit a portfolio of evidence in **one, any or all** of five 'achievement categories', reflecting the range of their past and current roles and activities, together with a detailed personal statement of their past and current roles and activities. The achievement categories are:
 - i. Professional practice
 - ii. Leadership
 - iii. Teaching & education
 - iv. Innovation & creativity
 - v. Academic & research
- 1.3 Candidates in active professional practice **must** submit in the 'professional practice' category.
- 1.4 For each submitted category, candidates must give the name of a referee able to vouch for the reliability of the evidence. When applying under more than one category, candidates should identify at least two different referees.
- 1.5 The portfolio of evidence will be evaluated against published criteria. The Fellowship Committee may either approve the application and refer it to the Faculty Board for final approval or reject it and give reasons why.

2. The Application Process

- 2.1 Details about the achievement criteria can be found in Appendix 1 of this document and relevant application forms will be available on the web site. Figure 1 outlines a flowchart from application through to Fellowship being awarded.
- 2.2 There will be a three-step application process where candidates first register, prepare their evidence, and then submit their applications.
- 2.3 Candidates who wish to be considered for Fellowship must first register their application. A **non-refundable** fee of £150 is payable at this stage.
- 2.4 The Faculty will check the application against the eligibility criteria, including whether the candidate has been a member in good standing for five consecutive years (or in the case of Foundation Members, those who have been eligible for Foundation Membership for at least five years). As with other awards, candidates are also asked to declare whether they have **any litigation, disciplinary, professional conduct, or performance issues that might affect their suitability as a Fellow**. These are not necessarily a bar to Fellowship, and can be discussed informally and in confidence with the Registrar in advance of an application being made.

- 2.5 Upon successful registration, each candidate will be allocated a reference number which should be used on all subsequent correspondence. Candidates may seek support, advice about their suitability or any general requests for information about the new route from the Faculty office. Consideration should be given to identifying Fellows who could act as mentors.
- 2.6 Candidates may submit evidence in one, any or all of the achievement categories, with the proviso that a candidate in active professional practice must submit in the 'professional practice' category. Candidates should submit evidence in a profile of categories that reflects the range of their past and current roles and activities.
- 2.7 All candidates must submit a detailed 'personal statement' of their past and current roles and activities for each chosen achievement category. This may also include any personal circumstances they wish to bring to the attention of the Fellowship committee. The personal statement must be accurate, full and verifiable.
- 2.8 For each chosen category, candidates must also give the name of a referee able to vouch for the accuracy of the information cited. Referees should be of sufficient standing and relevant experience to be able to attest to the accuracy of the evidence collated.
- 2.9 Candidates must submit their personal statement electronically by completing a separate form for each chosen category. Candidates may also attach an electronic copy of their CV. Supplementary supporting evidence should be seen and signed off by the referee for that section and should not be submitted with the application unless requested. Applications may only be accepted from registered candidates.
- 2.10 Candidates will receive acknowledgement of receipt of their applications by the Faculty office, who will act as the main point of contact for enquiries relating to their application.
- 2.11 The second part of the Fellowship fee (£150) is payable upon completion of the process i.e. after a recommendation of Fellowship has been made by the Fellowship Committee to the Faculty Board.
- 2.12 The Fellowship Committee will meet to consider applications twice per year.

3 The Assessment Process

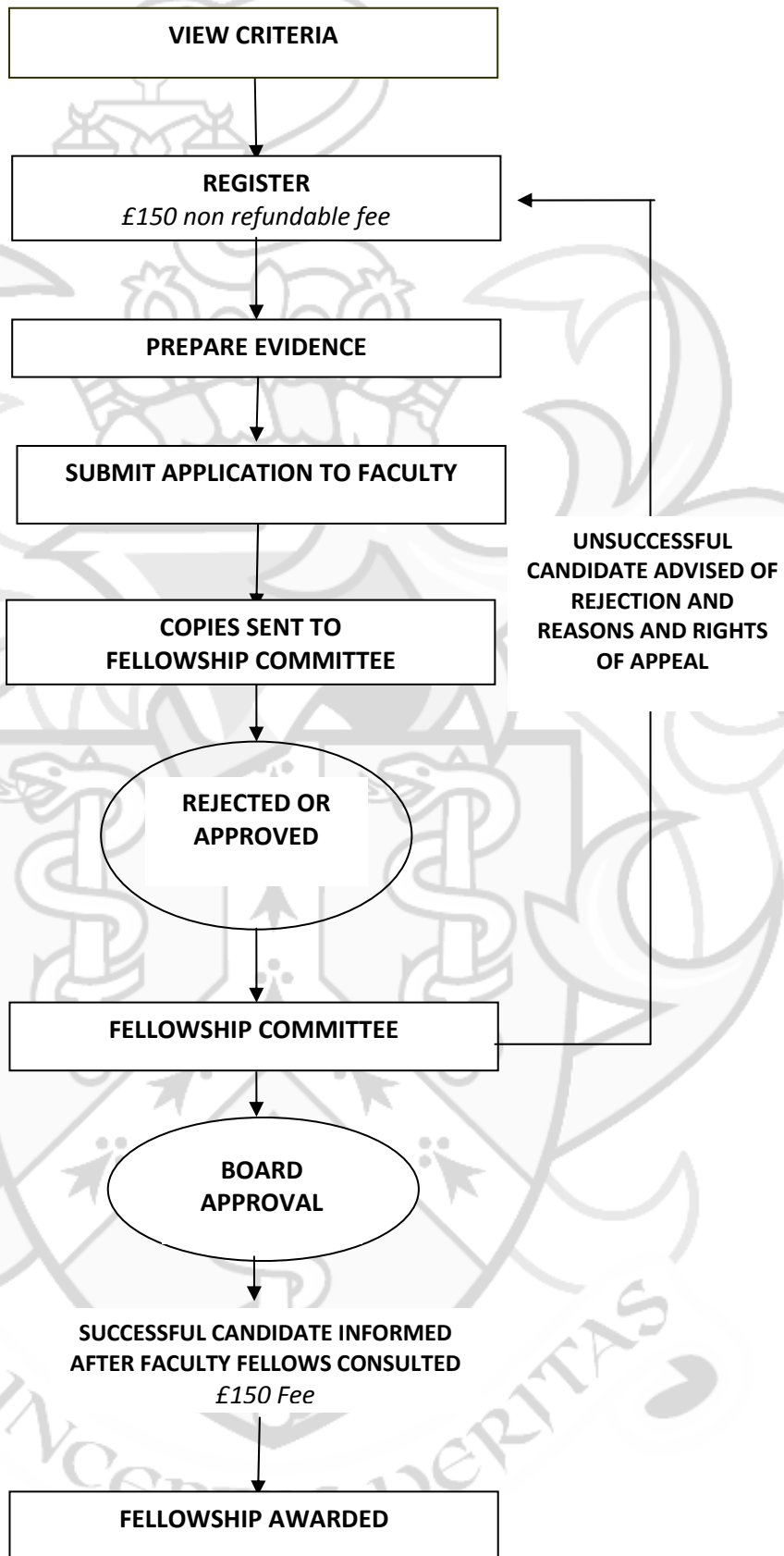
- 3.1 Copies of the candidate's statements will be sent to all members of the Fellowship Committee for preliminary evaluation. Each member of the Fellowship Committee will individually make a two-stage evaluation:
 - i. Stage 1 – An evaluation, category by category, of the candidate's evidence against the achievement categories (see Appendix 1), including an assessment of the scale, scope and accumulated weight of the candidate's achievement in the category.
 - ii. Stage 2 – A global evaluation of the cumulative weight of the candidate's overall attainments against the word picture of a Fellow of the Faculty (see Appendix 2). Each assessor will make a decision of 'at or above the standard for Fellowship', 'probably at the standard for Fellowship', or 'does not meet the standard for Fellowship'.
- 3.2 The evaluations of individual assessor will be collated and, if there are discrepancies of opinion, circulated and discussed among the group as a whole. A consensus recommendation, which will be either 'recommended for Fellowship' or 'rejected', will be forwarded to the Faculty Board for approval. Fellows of the Faculty will be given an opportunity to comment on the Board's recommendation as currently happens. The Fellowship Committee may recommend a modified resubmission. Candidates will be advised accordingly.

- 3.3 In the event of an adverse decision, candidates would have recourse to an appeals procedure, determined by the Board which could comprise three Fellows nominated by the Board and not members of the Fellowship committee. Candidates must appeal in writing within four weeks of being informed of the decision of the Fellowship Committee indicating the reasons and submitting the evidence to challenge the decision. The submitted application and the reasons and evidence challenging the decision will then be considered by the Appeals Panel within a further four weeks. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final.

4 Criteria, standards and evidence

- 4.1 The proposed new route to Fellowship has to strike a balance between the objectivity needed in the interests of fairness and the subjectivity inherent in deciding what is ultimately a matter of opinion. The decision as to whether or not a colleague is worthy of Fellowship is inescapably a matter of judgement, not of measurement. It needs to be remembered that the previous process of Fellowship rested almost entirely on the global judgements of members of the Fellowship Committee. While this system has its shortcomings, it would be unwise to discard the principle of 'experienced judges exercising their judgement' in favour of the spurious reliability of a more prescriptive approach. Fellowship marks the recognition by one's peers that one's contribution to forensic and legal medicine has gone significantly over and above what might reasonably be expected of a Member of the Faculty. The assessment process should mirror this description; the Fellowship Committee, acting as proxies for the community of one's peers, can be trusted to recognise such 'added value' without relying on overly detailed or specific criteria. One may talk loosely about 'the standard required for Fellowship', but it should not be inferred from this that a checklist of pass/fail criteria is – in most of the proposed achievement categories – the right way of capturing it.
- 4.2 One solution to this dilemma is to develop a series of 'word pictures' and generalised descriptions to illustrate the type and level of achievement being sought. In this context, assessors are able to abstract from the detail of a candidate's responses an impression which they can match against word pictures covering the gamut from 'dangerous' to 'outstanding'.
- 4.3 A 'word picture' has been developed for each achievement category, based on feedback modified for the RCGP Fellowship criteria and adapted for this Faculty in each of the respective areas (Appendix 1).
- 4.4 Inevitably, there will be some overlap between achievement categories, and some ambiguity as to where a particular achievement should be located. For example, acting as an appraiser might be considered 'teaching and education' or 'leadership'. Candidates should not be disadvantaged by such arbitrary categorisations. By moving away from a checklist approach in favour of global judgements, assessors can make the necessary compensations when coming to an overall view.
- 4.5 Particularly in the early stages of the new system, quality control and consistency monitoring will be essential. This will be done by a regular review process and updated in the light of experience. This will be the responsibility of the Fellowship Committee.
- 4.6 The Faculty's intention is not to make documenting their achievement an ordeal for candidates, or to expose them to a high risk of embarrassment or failure. It is fully expected that the vast majority of candidates – who in their own mature estimation are worthy of consideration and who will have had support from colleagues – will be successful. On the other hand, it is important for the esteem in which Fellowship is held for its award to be preceded by a serious scrutiny of each candidate's merits.

Figure 1 - APPLICATION PROCESS



APPENDIX 1 - FELLOWSHIP ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY CRITERIA

1 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- 1.1 This achievement category is unique in that we require every candidate in active professional practice to submit evidence.
- 1.2 The Fellowship process needs to temper this aspiration with respect for the diverse and sometimes disadvantaged practice circumstances of candidates whose main claim to Fellowship centres on other achievement categories.
- 1.3 The nature of a candidate's professional responsibilities should be clear from the submitted personal statement.
- 1.4 All candidates must submit documentary evidence of at least one satisfactory appraisal from 2009, two consecutive satisfactory annual appraisals from 2010 and thereafter three consecutive satisfactory annual appraisals.

Candidates Submitting Evidence ONLY in this Category

- 1.5 Fellowship candidates whose application is based solely or predominantly in this achievement category can be expected to submit more extensive and rigorous evidence of their professional standards.
- 1.6 The criteria in this category are likely to evolve more rapidly than in other categories, as the revalidation process comes on stream. The Fellowship Committee will monitor and fine-tune criteria in this category particularly closely and regularly.

2 LEADERSHIP

- 2.1 A potential Fellow submitting in this category may have been involved in activities such as forensic or legal or coronial work at national or international level, work with other healthcare bodies, or in any field (including the medico-political) where he or she has the opportunity to promote the quality and reputation of forensic and legal medicine.
- 2.2 Assessors may want to take into account the nature, scope, scale and length of service of the candidate's leadership role; the impact and outcomes of the achievement; and any degree of self-sacrifice to serve needy communities or patients.
- 2.3 Important leadership qualities also include the empowerment of others, and demonstration of quality and of support. More than anything, assessors will consider what has changed for the better as a result of the candidate's leadership.
- 2.4 It is likely that the degree of achievement will be titrated against the scale of the challenge – in other words, achieving a great deal in a relatively minor role may be seen as the equivalent of lesser success at a more major and challenging role, and vice versa.
- 2.5 The strongest candidates in this category are likely to have made a real and widespread difference to the development of forensic and legal medicine. They might, for example, have chaired a substantial committee. It must also be remembered that strong leaders may show personal integrity and courage in stopping things happening – and so the outcome may be invisible.

3 TEACHING AND EDUCATION

3.1 The following are examples of roles and activities a potential Fellow might have undertaken if submitting in this category:

- i. Undertaking a national assessment role, either within the Faculty e.g. MFFLM examiner or outside the Faculty
- ii. Acting as an appraiser
- iii. Appointment as a Senior Lecturer
- iv. Appointment as a Faculty Course Tutor or equivalent.
- v. An appropriate postgraduate qualification in teaching or education such as Diploma in Medical Education.
- vi. Publication on educational topics in peer-reviewed journals.
- vii. A substantial contribution to the development or delivery of undergraduate or postgraduate courses.
- viii. Work of national significance in undergraduate or postgraduate forensic and legal medicine.

4 INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

4.1 These are qualities usually easier to recognise than to quantify or calibrate. Moreover, the environment and context in which a doctor works affects the extent of the effort required to be innovative. It is easier to be innovative in a stimulating and supportive environment. It is likely that this achievement category may, for some candidates' overlap with others, e.g. leadership, or teaching and education.

4.2 Innovation has been described as 'applied creativity' and 'a constituent of design'¹. A potential Fellow submitting in this category should be able to point to identifiable outcomes of his or her innovative or creative activity in one or more of the following areas:

- i. Clinical care, e.g. innovative models of care delivery or the application of best practice
- ii. Teamwork, e.g. innovative ways of multidisciplinary working
- iii. Non-academic publications e.g. newsletters, journalism, articles, commentary, books
- iv. The philosophy of forensic and legal medicine, e.g. new ways of describing, analysing or explaining aspects of the specialty through, for example, lectures, writing or the media
- v. Teaching, e.g. initiating original ways of teaching and learning in the practice, or within vocational training
- vi. Media engagement, e.g. promoting the understanding of, and higher standards for forensic and legal medicine through contributions to newspapers, magazines, radio and television
- vii. Particularly strong candidates in this category are likely to be – at least within the profession – household names by virtue of the impact of their work. They might have had an influence on some aspect of the discipline at national level, or be associated with a particular 'high profile' project. Educational innovators might, for example, have developed new materials for e-learning, distance learning, continuing professional development or multi-professional education.

¹ Prof. Richard Kimbell, Goldsmiths University of London, 2002

5 ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH

5.1 The following are examples of achievements a potential Fellow might demonstrate if submitting in this category:

- i. A postgraduate degree in research e.g. taught Masters with significant research component, MD or PhD
- ii. Publications in peer-reviewed journals
- iii. A research post in a university department, or substantive role within research network or accredited research practice
- iv. Membership of the editorial board of a relevant research journal
- v. Recipient of a national research award or personal research development award e.g. WG Johnson Trust
- vi. Invitations to present research work at national or international meetings
- vii. Evidence of obtaining project grants or attracting research funding to undertake work relevant to general practice
- viii. Contribution to research capacity development e.g. by supervising research students.

5.2 Particularly strong candidates in this category might have achieved one or more of the following:

- i. A significant body of publications in the leading peer-reviewed journals
- ii. A senior position in a university department e.g. Reader or Professor
- iii. Award of Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences or of other Royal Colleges as a result of contributions to research
- iv. Evidence that his or her own research has had an impact on national policy or practice
- v. Invitations to deliver eponymous lectures
- vi. Editorship of a research journal.

APPENDIX 2 - 'A FELLOW OF THE FACULTY'

- 1.1 This 'word picture' of a Fellow of the Faculty is offered as a profile against which to evaluate the global impression formed of a candidate after appraising his or her portfolio of submitted evidence.
- 1.2 Fellowship is an honour, denoting the esteem in which a Member of the Faculty is held by his or her peers.
- 1.3 It is a mark of achievement to which every Member should aspire and from which no Member should be debarred solely by circumstance.
- 1.4 A Fellow is someone who has made a contribution to forensic and legal medicine, over and above what might reasonably be expected of any Member of the Faculty. In this sense, Fellowship signifies that the Fellow has brought 'added value' to his or her career.
- 1.5 Fellowship can be merited both by the breadth and the depth of achievement. Some Fellows earn recognition for contributions made in a number of areas and over extended periods of time. For others, Fellowship is an accolade marking outstanding and far-reaching achievement in a relatively narrow field.
- 1.6 A Fellow of the Faculty is an ambassador for the Faculty's standards and values in whom the Faculty is happy to signal its pride.

