

Hints and tips from previous Royal Society University Research Fellows

Below are some pieces of advice and questions to consider that we have been given from previous University Research Fellows held at Oxford that may be helpful to consider when writing your current application or at a future interview.

- I would emphasise that the applicant should clearly explain the significance of his/her specific research question in a bigger context and not just focus on intricate technical details of experiments planned in year 3, for example.
- They're looking for unique contributions to the research area, not something that others have done or could do in the future. What's special about me, why could I do something that has eluded others?
- What's the big picture - how would a general audience perceive this research, its validity, its contribution to science and society?
- I kept referring to 'we', but realised that made it sound like I'd got a whole team working on this, which is far from the truth!
- I was asked what my contribution was to all my co-authored papers.
- They wanted to know why my science hadn't been done before, why was it crucial and timely now.
- How should the Royal Society assess whether I've achieved my goals in 5 years time? How would the field have changed because of my fellowship?
- What do I expect to be my most significant piece of research in the next five years, and what am I most proud of? What's my next Nature or Science paper (an unfair question, but it makes the point!)
- What are my future plans for taking on leadership roles, and where could I see myself in a decade's time?
- What's my route to independence?
- Why Oxford, and not some other institution?
- The big picture is something that should certainly be emphasised in a proposal, rather than getting bogged down in the minutiae.