

Announcement of Opportunity

ESPA Fellowships

Scheme A: Early Career Research Fellowships

**Scheme B: Research Capacity Strengthening
Fellowships**

**Closing Date – 16:00 GMT, Wednesday 20th
November**



A research programme co-funded by DFID, NERC & ESRC and accredited by LWEC



Change Log

Date	Section	Page	Detail
23/10/2013	Annex 7: Timeline for the Call		Application Deadline corrected to 20 th November.

Background and Introduction to the Schemes

The ESPA programme aims to deliver world-class research through innovative partnerships that cross disciplinary boundaries, are international and most importantly have full involvement of talented developing country researchers.

ESPA's approach to [capacity strengthening](#) emphasises the need to support researchers around the world to develop the skills and experience to generate and apply world-class research that addresses the priorities detailed in ESPA's [Knowledge Strategy](#).

The programme is committed to help build the next generation of researchers working in areas supporting the ESPA programme and research agenda. ESPA is launching a major new initiative to create and support a global network of ESPA Fellowships. The programme intends to support approximately 12 ESPA Fellows between 2014 and 2016 who will work with existing ESPA projects and the ESPA Directorate.

Scheme A: ESPA Early Career Research Fellowships

ESPA will support the professional development of promising early stage researchers (with currently up to 6 years' experience after completing their PhD or have equivalent professional experience). **Early Career Research Fellows will be required to implement an independent programme of research linked to an ESPA project.**

By the end of the Fellowship, ESPA Early Career Research Fellows will have developed the skills and experience required to launch their own independent research career working in an area relevant to ESPA. They will have submitted one or more research publications as first author resulting from the research undertaken through their ESPA Fellowship. As such, at the end of the fellowship they would be expected to be in a position that they would be able to submit a research application as a Lead Investigator (PI/Co-I) to a funding stream such as ESPA, and be able to start to establish their own research group.

This Scheme is open to applicants of all nationalities. Detailed information about eligibility is contained in Annex 1.

Scheme B: ESPA Research Capacity Strengthening Fellowships

ESPA will support the professional development of researchers who are **nationals of a low-income country**. Applicants must hold at least a relevant Bachelor's or Master's degree (no more than five years post award of the most recent degree). ESPA Research Capacity Strengthening Fellowships have a greater emphasis on personal research capacity strengthening than the Early Career Research Fellowships. **Research Capacity Strengthening Fellows will join the research team of an existing, active ESPA project and contribute to the core research of that project.**

By the end of the Fellowship, ESPA Research Capacity Strengthening Fellows will have developed the skills and experience required to contribute to new research projects in ESPA's area of activity as either Co-investigator or Principal Investigator (or equivalents). They will have contributed to one or more ESPA research publications as a co-author resulting from the research undertaken through their ESPA Fellowship.

This Scheme is restricted to applicants who have the nationality of a low-income country as defined by the World Bank's classification¹. Detailed information about eligibility is contained in Annex 1.

Mentors for ESPA Fellows

Each ESPA Fellow will be required to have one or more mentors. Mentors will provide guidance and support to the ESPA Fellow and ensure the success of each award. Each ESPA Fellow will be required to have at least one mentor who is (or was) involved in a significant research role in an ESPA project as either Co-Investigator or Principal Investigator. Additional mentors need not have a link to an ESPA project, but the application must clearly specify the contribution that additional mentors will make, and we would expect that these mentors will be working in an area of ESPA-type research (for further clarification, speak to the ESPA Secretariat espa@nerc.ac.uk).

The lead mentor for the ESPA Fellowship must be involved (as Co-I or PI) with an eligible ESPA project (see section below). The fellow need not be based at the same institution as the lead mentor, but fellows must be based at the same institution/organisation as one of their mentors, and said mentor must be employed by that host organisation.

Additional criteria for mentors are detailed in Annex 2.

Host Organisations

The host organisation for an ESPA Fellowship will hold the contract with the ESPA Directorate, who will be responsible for disbursement of the funds, and post-award management of the Fellows for the lifetime of the Fellowships. They will employ at least one of the mentors for the fellowship and will normally also employ the ESPA Fellow who may be seconded (full or part-time) from another organisation. There is no restriction on the location of the host organisation.

The host organisation will need to demonstrate its ability to manage and account for public funds.

Additional criteria for host organisations are detailed in Annex 3.

Linking with Eligible ESPA Projects

All ESPA Fellows will be required to work with one (or more) ESPA projects. At least one of the Fellow's mentors will need to be a researcher working on an eligible ESPA project as either Co-investigator or Principal Investigator.

A list of eligible ESPA projects and Principal Investigators is published on the ESPA website at <http://www.espa.ac.uk/funding/fellowships>. Every Fellowship application will need to be accompanied by a letter of support from the Lead Mentor (up to 2 sides A4, font size no smaller than 11).

Applicants for ESPA Research Capacity Strengthening Fellowships should note that they will need to be associated with an **active** ESPA research project. This **only** includes ESPA-2011, ESPA-2012 and ESPA-2013 projects (www.espa.ac.uk/projects).

¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications>

Applicants for ESPA Early Career Research Fellowships should note that they will need to be associated with ESPA research projects from the following; ESPA Framework Grants, ESPA-2011, ESPA-2012 and ESPA-2013 (www.espa.ac.uk/projects).

Each Mentor may only support **two Fellowship applications in total**, regardless of whether they are lead mentor, or co-mentor on these. **This is also regardless of how many individual ESPA Projects that mentor is involved with.**

Applicants should note that ESPA projects may opt out of the scheme at any time, including if they have exceeded the number of applications they are supporting.

Potential applicants should contact ESPA PIs using the web form available at <http://www.espa.ac.uk/funding/fellowships>. As part of the web-form, potential applicants should provide a brief summary of what they intend to do as an ESPA Fellow. Once contact between a potential applicant and mentor has been established by way of the ESPA web-form, the applicant is permitted to send only one attachment of any relevant supporting information to the mentor. Additional support on contacting suitable projects may be available through the ESPA Directorate (admin@espa.ac.uk).

Budget and Duration

Each fellowship application will need to be accompanied by a budget prepared utilising the financial spreadsheet provided from the application website. The budget should be prepared in conjunction with the host organisation that will hold the contract. Detailed instructions on preparing the budget and eligible costs are provided in Annex 4. The financial conditions linked to the grant are provided as Annex 5.

	Early Career Research Fellows	Research Capacity Strengthening Fellows
Total funds allocated to call	Total of £800,000 allocated to the call (at least 4 awards)	Total of £800,000 allocated to the call (at least 8 awards)
Maximum budget per award	Maximum award of £200,000	Maximum award of £100,000
Start date	Start date of 1 May 2014	Start date of 1 May 2014
End Date	End date of no later than 31 December 2016	End date of no later than 31 December 2016
Time allocated to Fellow	At least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) ²	At least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) ³

² The Fellow should work at least 50 % of their time on ESPA.

³ The Fellow should work at least 50 % of their time on ESPA.

Application Procedure

Application forms are available on the web at:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/espa/events/fellowships.asp>

Applications will only be accepted on the forms provided from the NERC website, and within the limits stated.

Word and character limits will be checked and enforced. Exceeding these limits may result in an application being rejected prior to peer review.

Applications must be submitted in their native file format (MS-Word and MS-Excel) as they will be subject to electronic processing.

Applications submitted as a PDF or other file formats cannot be accepted.

The Closing Date for applications is 16:00 GMT Wednesday 20th November 2013.

Applications received after this point will not be accepted.

Applications (including all the necessary attached documents) should be sent by ⁴ email to espa@nerc.ac.uk by 16:00 GMT Wednesday 20th November 2013.

Each application will consist of the following documents:

1. ESPA Fellowship Application Form (*complete all sections*)
2. CV for the applicant (*ESPA Fellow; using the template provided*)
3. CVs for each mentor (*using the template provided*)
4. Financial spreadsheet (*using the template provided*)
5. Letter of support from the Lead Mentor (*up to 2 sides A4*)
6. Letter of support from the Host Organisation (*up to 2 sides A4*)

No additional information should be provided as part of the application. Any additional information provided will be disregarded and not made available to reviewers.

⁴ The Fellow should work at least 50 % of their time on ESPA.

Assessment Process

The assessment process will concentrate upon two core criteria; the suitability of the applicant, and the excellence and suitability of the research proposed. (See Annex 6 for details on the assessment criteria.)

The Assessment of Applications will be handled by the ESPA Secretariat, and will follow a strict process:

Application Submitted	Eligibility, remit, and word limit checks will be carried out	20 th November
Peer Review 1	Applications will be sent to up to 3 expert external peer reviewers, who will assess the applications, providing both scores and comments	20 th November – 30 th January
Sift Meeting	An external peer review panel will sift applications on the basis of the reviews received in peer review 1, and recommend a proportion for further review, and some to be rejected	12 th February
Peer Review 2	Applications that pass the sift meeting will be sent to further peer review (scores and comments). All Applicants that make it this far will be invited to interview	13 th February – 6 th April
Interview Panels	Applicants will be invited to a one hour interview where they will be asked to make a presentation, and following	7 th – 10 th April

	this will be questioned by the peer review panel	
PEB Meeting	The Programme Executive Board will consider the recommendation from the peer review panel, and then make the final decision on which fellows to fund	1 day between 10 th – 16 th April
Funding Decision	The Secretariat will let applicants know of the outcome of their application within this period	16 th – 20 th April

Annex 1. Eligibility Criteria and summary of responsibilities for ESPA Fellows

Criteria	Early Career Research Fellowships	Research Capacity Strengthening Fellowships
Country eligibility	Open to any nationality	Applicants must be nationals of a Low Income Country ⁵
Qualifications	Applicants should hold a relevant PhD, and be no more than 6 years post award at the time of application ⁶ OR should hold at least a Bachelor's degree (although we would expect most applicants would have at least a Master's degree), and be able to demonstrate between 5 – 10 years of relevant professional experience.	Applicants must hold at least a relevant Bachelor's or Master's degree (no more than five years post award) ⁷ .
Time allocated by the Fellow	The Fellow should work at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent ⁸ (FTE) on the grant.	The Fellow should work at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent ⁹ (FTE) on the grant.
Objective of the Scheme	The fellow(s) will apply to conduct an independent programme of research, contributing to the body of work in the ESPA programme and complementary to the already funded ESPA projects.	The fellow will be trained and mentored such that they will be able to conduct an independent programme of research on completion of the fellowship, with the potential to become active researchers in, and contributors to, projects addressing ESPA's research agenda ¹⁰ .
What will the fellow do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an independent programme of research, as proposed by the applicant, which should be complementary to one or more ESPA projects • Produce results that have the potential to be published internationally in leading peer-reviewed journals. (i.e. ISI listed or equivalent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a small research project, as proposed by the applicant and mentor, embedded within a current ESPA project • Develop the skills necessary to conduct a body of independent research. • Work with a research mentor to develop professional skills to

⁵ For these purposes, Low Income Countries (LIC) are as defined by the World Bank Group's classification to define low-income status. <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications>

⁶ The 6 years excludes eligible career breaks including maternity leave, paternity leave, and bereavement. If you are in doubt as to your eligibility you should speak to the ESPA Secretariat

⁷ The 5 years excludes eligible career breaks including maternity leave, paternity leave, and bereavement. If you are in doubt as to your eligibility you should speak to the ESPA Secretariat.

⁸ i.e. spend at least 50% of their time on the project

⁹ i.e. spend at least 50% of their time on the project

¹⁰ This future research could be supported from many funding avenues, not the ESPA programme alone; the ESPA programme is due to end in 2017.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards being able to launch their own independent research career past the end of the fellowship, with the potential to become a lead investigator¹¹ in ESPA-type research • Refine their skills to be able to participate in a research grant at the level of Co-Investigator or above after completion of the Fellowship 	<p>become a more effective independent researcher (e.g. writing papers, writing grant proposals, conceptualising hypotheses, designing experiments).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as part of the associated ESPA project to contribute to one or more academic publications by being involved in data collection, analysis and drafting of the manuscript.
What will the fellow produce?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the cutting edge thinking and innovation of the ESPA project they are affiliated to. • Produce new data and analysis relevant to the ESPA programme • Submit as first author at least one paper for submission in an international peer reviewed journal within the lifetime of the fellowship • Present work from the fellowship in at least one ESPA Event (e.g. the annual conference) • Will be required to work with the ESPA directorate to develop one or more impact related document/outcome/publication • Produce a final report, as agreed with the ESPA Directorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and submit a record and reflections on the research capacity strengthening activities undertaken throughout the fellowship. • To contribute as an author to at least one paper for submission in an international peer reviewed journal within the lifetime of the project • Will be required to work with the ESPA directorate to develop one or more impact related document/outcome/publication • Produce a brief final report, as agreed with the ESPA Directorate
Post Award Plans	Early Career Research Fellows will be expected to be in a position that they would launch their own independent research career at the end of the Fellowship, be confident in their ability to identify novel research questions and develop feasible, robust and innovative	Research Capacity Strengthening Fellows will be expected to have developed the core skills to be able to contribute to new research as researchers in projects sympathetic to, if not funded by ESPA's research agenda at the end of the Fellowship. They are

	projects to address them, and independently disseminate research findings to academic and user audiences.	expected to aim to work in a developing country at the end of the Fellowship.
Funding and duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum award of £200,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum award of £100,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of £800,000 allocated to the call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of £800,000 allocated to the call
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start date of 1 May 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start date of 1 May 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End date of no later than 31 December 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End date of no later than 31 December 2016

Annex 2. Requirements for Mentors for ESPA Fellows

The Mentor(s) for each ESPA Fellow will play an important role in each Fellowship in terms of providing guidance and support and ensuring success of each award. The following criteria will need to be met.

- Each ESPA Fellowship will be required to have at least one Mentor who plays a significant research role (Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator) in an eligible and available ESPA project. The Lead-Mentor **must** be a researcher (PI or Co-I) in an eligible ESPA project. These eligible projects are listed¹² on the ESPA website at <http://www.espa.ac.uk/funding/fellowships>.
- Each Mentor may only support two Fellowship applications in total, regardless of whether they are lead mentor, or co-mentor on these. **This is also regardless of how many individual ESPA Projects the mentor is involved with.**
- **If individual mentors indicate support for more than two fellows, the ESPA Secretariat will insist that they retract their support from any of the surplus fellows (of the mentors choosing). Failure to respond within the timeframe stated will mean that the Secretariat will disqualify all applications supported by this mentor.**
- The Lead-Mentor for the Fellowship and will have responsibility for delivery of the programme of work, financial management and reporting.
- The Lead Mentor will have responsibility for undertaking a risk assessment and all health and safety associated with the award.
- Mentors will be expected to guide and support the research and impact activities of ESPA Fellows and design an appropriate programme of professional development tailored to meet the needs of each individual Fellow.
- An ESPA Fellow may have more than one Mentor, as long as at least one fulfils the requirement of being involved in an eligible ESPA project. Additional mentors need not be formally associated with an ESPA project.
- One of the Fellow's mentors will need to be a staff member of a potential host organisation eligible to hold the budget for the ESPA Fellowships (see Annex 3).
- When approached by a potential Fellow, The Principal Investigator of an ESPA project will need to initially indicate their support or otherwise to the potential fellow, and may suggest project team members who could act as mentors if they themselves are not available/most suitable.
- It is the responsibility of the lead-PI of the ESPA project to ensure that their project team is not overstressing itself in support of potential fellows. Thus ensuring that should all fellows they have lent support to in application get funded, that they can adequately sustain and support this activity, without detriment to the project itself.

12 Please note that ESPA projects and project components have the option of opting out of the Fellowship scheme and that their details will be removed from the ESPA website when they have reached the limit of supporting two potential applicants.

Annex 3. Eligibility Criteria for Host Organisation

The Host Organisation will manage the funds for the ESPA Fellowship and would be expected to employ¹³ the ESPA Fellow. The Host Organisation will need to demonstrate their ability to provide a suitable working environment for each fellow, including their research and professional development activities.

In keeping with UK Government policy potential host organisations will need to demonstrate their ability to manage and account for public funds. All potential host organisations will be required to provide the following information during contract negotiation:

- Copies of the last three years of audited accounts.
- Articles of association and governance documents for the organisation.
- Evidence of a suitable bank account held in the name of the organisation that will be used to receive funds for the ESPA Fellowship.
- Details of contracts and grants with a UK Research Council or DFID held by the organisation over the last three years. (UK Universities need not provide this information as details on contracts are held centrally)

Institutions that can demonstrate that they are already in receipt of funds through a direct contract with either a UK Research Council or the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) will not require any additional eligibility checks.

Institutions that cannot provide evidence of having held a contract with a UK Research Council or DFID may be subject to additional eligibility checks conducted by the ESPA programme.

Annex 4. Guidelines on budgets and eligible costs.

An ESPA Fellowship grant will fund 100% of the direct research costs for applicant organisations. All costs associated with the research project must be itemised and fully justified in the Justification of Resources. Eligible costs are costs that are explicitly identifiable as arising from the conduct of a project, are charged as the cash value actually spent and are supported by an audit record.

Funding is available to cover the eligible costs incurred in delivering the ESPA Fellowships including the cost of employing fellows (or their secondments), professional development and research activities and reasonable travel expenses. Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses are considered an eligible cost.

It is expected that the majority of the funding (at least 70 %) for the fellowship will be allocated to cover personnel costs including the cost of employing the Fellow and their core programme of work. Applications that have significant resources allocated to other headings (e.g. salaries of mentors) are less likely to be successful.

Calculating Staff Costs.

ESPA Fellowships will cover the direct costs of employing the ESPA Fellow and any associated staff (e.g. field assistants) involved in the project. The resources allocated to these posts will need to be justified in the justification of resources section of the application form.

The application should only include the time that staff will spend working directly on the grant. Costs for individuals are based on a working year of 220 days (7.5 hours per day).

Eligible staff costs include:

- Salary costs.
- Social security and health payments (e.g. National Insurance in the UK).
- Employer's pension contributions.

Host organisations may be required to provide evidence of their staff cost calculations during contract negotiation for potential awards.

ESPA does not pay consultancy rates (or equivalent) for any staff involved in its projects.

Mentor's Costs

It is expected that many mentors will be employed by ESPA projects during the fellowship.

Costs associated with mentors may be included in the application within the following guidelines:

- Mentors who are not currently employed on an ESPA project may charge their time calculated on the basis outlined in the previous section. The total financial value of the cost allocated to mentors should not exceed 10 % of the overall staff cost.
- No additional staff costs will be permitted for mentors who are currently employed on an ESPA project.

- Modest additional costs for the mentor's support for the fellowship may be included in the application (e.g. travel and subsistence) where it can be proved that this will benefit the Fellow's own activities and expected outcomes for the Fellowship.

Travel and Subsistence

Funds may be provided for travel and subsistence for use by the Fellow and where clearly justified other staff involved in the Fellowship.

Funding will be provided for journeys, visits and fieldwork where these costs are approved at the outset of the grant. Each journey must be itemised, justified and fully costed in the Fellowship application.

ESPA will consider funding the cost of low-carbon approaches to collaboration (including, where appropriate, the costs of technology or of less economic, but more environmentally friendly means of transport). Please note that ESPA (in common with the Research Councils) will not pay for the cost of proposed carbon offsetting arising from travel associated with research grants.

Risk assessment for safety and security should be carried out for travel. The Host Organisation is responsible for risk assessment, health and safety for the Fellow.

Requests for funding to attend conferences will be considered. These must be named, justified and costed in the application. The justification should show how the conference will either directly benefit the research, assist the professional development of the fellow, or facilitate future impacts of research.

The ESPA Directorate will organise additional events for ESPA Fellows. The costs of these events will be met by the Directorate and need not be included in the budget for the application.

Professional Development Costs

The budget form should detail any significant costs associated with professional development for the Fellow.

Fieldwork and impact costs

The budget form should detail any significant costs associated with the Fellow's field work and impact activities.

Equipment

ESPA Fellows should not have a requirement for major items of equipment (defined as costing more than £3,000 including VAT). For this reason equipment will normally be considered an ineligible cost for ESPA Fellowships. If there is a clearly justifiable requirement for large equipment, this should be discussed with the ESPA Secretariat in advance of completing an application.

If you are unsure of the eligibility of equipment requests of any value, we recommend you speak to the ESPA Secretariat (espa@nerc.ac.uk) ahead of submission of your application.

Queries regarding large equipment (more than £3000 incl VAT) should be submitted to the ESPA Secretariat no later than 2 weeks prior to the closing date of 20th November.

Other Costs

Costs of other items or activities not covered by other heading which are dedicated to the project including, for example, consumables, books, purchase/hire of vehicles and items of equipment costing less than £3,000.

Calculating Overhead (Indirect Costs)

The ESPA Fellowship Scheme is not covered by the UK Research Councils approach to full economic costing

Applicants may charge overheads as a fixed percentage of their staff costs **up to a maximum of 50 % of the eligible staff costs**. The host organisation is not required to justify their calculation, but may be asked to demonstrate that the value used in their application is comparable to other contracts that they hold.

Institutions are not required to account for their expenditure of overheads.

Indirect costs are non-specific costs charged across all projects based on estimates, which are not otherwise included as a direct charge on the project. They include the costs of the Research Organisation's administration such as personnel, finance, library and some departmental services. Requests for minor costs such as postage, photocopying and telephone costs should also be covered in the Overhead/Indirect costs.

Costs that must be covered by overheads.

The main costs that must be covered by overheads are those that would be considered as part of the cost of running an effective office or research institution. The following are examples of costs that may not be charged directly to ESPA grants and would therefore be expected to be covered by overheads.

- Charges for office or laboratory space
- Electricity, heating, lighting
- Telephone and basic communication costs (unless there is need for significant project-based activities such as phone interviews)
- Routine photocopying and printing (Large print runs such as publications or workshop papers may be charged to the grant)
- Standard Office computing, including desktop and laptop computers and associated software. Individual items of computing equipment may not be charged to a grant (High performance computing facilities which are linked to a specific research task may in some circumstances be charged to the grant – for further clarification please check with the ESPA Secretariat).
- Office support staff (e.g. finance staff, basic secretarial support, computing support staff)

- Routine Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff.

Additional costs that may be covered by overheads

Institutions may use any additional overhead funds that remain unallocated from the core costs above in any way that they wish, but we encourage applicants to use these funds to add value to, and ultimately benefit the operation of the ESPA funded activities.

Use of overheads for additional costs could include:

- Strategic investments in infrastructure, equipment or people.
- Personal and Professional Development of staff
- Employing additional staff to support projects (This does not need to be restricted to ESPA projects). Staff employed on overheads are not considered to be ESPA project staff.

If you are in any doubt about whether a specific cost should, or should not, be covered within overheads, please contact the ESPA Secretariat at espa@nerc.ac.uk.

Value Added Tax

European host institutions should note that the ESPA Fellowships are supported by public funds and that the contract will have the status of a research grant. For this reason awards should be zero-rated for VAT.

Annex 5. Financial Conditions

Subject to the following conditions, grant funds may be used, without reference to the ESPA Directorate, in such a manner as to best carry out the Fellowship.

Research grant funds are provided for a specific research project and may not be used to meet costs on any other project or activity. Any commitment incurred before a research grant is formally announced, or any commitment in excess of the amount awarded, is the responsibility of the Research Organisation.

Applications should be at current price levels with an allowance for inflation over the expected lifetime of the award.

The ESPA Directorate, on behalf of the funders, reserves the right to examine, in detail, or audit, all items of expenditure charged to an award. In addition, the funders and other representatives from the ESPA programme may visit selected Research Organisations.

All other financial conditions will be provided during grant award/contract negotiations.

Annex 6. Assessment Criteria

Applicants to both fellowship schemes will be expected to:

- Present a clear idea of the research/work they propose to conduct within the fellowship;
- Demonstrate an ability and/or commitment to conducting excellent, internationally competitive research;
- Demonstrate their research and career vision and philosophy, and outline ways in which they could develop over the lifetime of the fellowship;
- Explain how they will contribute to the ESPA research portfolio and interact with the leading international groups in this field (as appropriate);
- Demonstrate their understanding of the ESPA Programme.

Assessment of Applications will be based on the details contained in this announcement of opportunity, and **particularly the criteria in Annex 1**.

In addition, applications should demonstrate the following:

- a thorough grasp of their discipline and demonstrate their potential to progress in their field, and promise as an independent researcher
- that they are capable of successfully undertaking the programme of work proposed
- that they have identified the most appropriate research mentor and host institution to enable them to successfully complete the fellowship.
- a commitment to delivering the best possible outputs within the fellowship (as described in annex 1 for each scheme)
- a clear plan of work for the fellowship, that clearly fits within the objectives of ESPA.
- The excellence and suitability of the research proposed

Annex 7. Timeline for the call

Date	Stage	Applicant Responsibilities	Assessment/Funder responsibilities
30 September	Announcement of ESPA Fellowships Call		
20 th November	Application Deadline	Application must be submitted to espa@nerc.ac.uk by 16.00 GMT	
20 th November – 30 th January	Peer Review 1	None	External Peer Review
12 th February	Sift Meeting	None	External Expert Panel will assess the reviews received/applications
13 th February – 20 th February	Notification of outcome from Sift Meeting	To take note of outcome; applications passed onto the next peer review stage will be invited to interview at this stage	PEB will decide which applications are to be rejected, and this decision will be communicated by the Secretariat
13 th February – 6 th April	Peer Review 2	None	External Peer Review
7 th – 10 th April	Applicant interviews	Applicants will be invited to interview	External Peer review panel will interview applicants
16 th -20 th April	Funding decision		PEB will make the final funding decision, on the basis of panel recommendation
May 2014	Inception meeting	Successful applicants to attend meeting	
May onwards	Post Award support		The Directorate Will provide post-award support for all ESPA fellowships

