



1. What is the Australian Science Policy Fellowship Pilot Program?

The Australian Science Policy Fellowship program is an initiative of the Office of the Chief Scientist.

It is inspired and modelled on the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Science and Technology Policy Fellowships program.

The program provides an opportunity for early-to-mid career researchers to work in a Commonwealth Government department as policy officers for 12 months.

2. What benefits will I get from participating in the program?

Through the program, you will receive on-the-job training in, and experience in, policy development. In addition you will have opportunities to participate in mentoring and formal training to enhance your policy skills.

By the end of the program, you will have gained valuable skills, experience and insight into public policy. Should you choose to pursue a career in public policy, you will be well-placed to competitively apply for other policy and program roles.

3. How long is the Fellowship program?

The program duration is 12 months, from July to June.

4. Who will my employer be? How much will I be paid?

Successful candidates will be employed by participating Commonwealth Government host departments. Fellows will be employed at the APS6 level and remuneration is specified under the enterprise agreement of the host department.

Remuneration, employment conditions, entitlements and conditions of engagement will be in accordance with the employing agency's policies. You can find more information on pay scales in each department's enterprise agreement.

5. If I am successful how do I prepare for the experience of working in a Commonwealth Government department?

All participants will receive introductory training on the workings of the Commonwealth Government, and exposure to some of the issues, institutions, and individuals involved in federal policymaking.

6. May I opt for a shorter Fellowship? Is it possible to start the Fellowship at a different time of year?

No. The Fellowships are available only as a 12-month commitment starting in July.

7. Can I participate in the program part-time while I continue my research?

No. The program is designed to fully immerse you in policy development and requires a full-time commitment.

8. Where are the Fellowships located?

The Fellowship positions are Canberra-based.

Host departments may provide you with relocation assistance at a reasonable cost if necessary, in line with their enterprise agreement.

9. Who funds the Fellowships?

Fellowships are funded by the departments where participants are placed i.e. the host department. Host departments provide APS6 level remuneration as per their enterprise agreement pay scales.

The Office of the Chief Scientist manages the program and funds associated costs of the recruitment process, including attraction and selection.

10. Do I need to have a security clearance?

All participants will be required to obtain a minimum baseline security clearance, involving pre-employment and background checks. Some participating departments may require a higher level clearance. You do not need to have a security clearance at the time of application.

To ensure that the process runs smoothly, it is advisable to provide necessary documentation to your host department as soon as possible.

Many Commonwealth Government departments use AGSVA for their security clearances, and must follow AGSVA guidelines. Further information on the security clearance process, the different levels of security clearance that may be required, and documentation requirements, can be found via the following links:

<https://www.defence.gov.au/agsva/>

<https://www.defence.gov.au/AGSVA/FAQ/clearance-subject.asp>

<https://www.defence.gov.au/AGSVA/resources/fact-sheet-baseline-clearance-assessment.doc>

<https://www.defence.gov.au/AGSVA/resources/fact-sheet-nv1-clearance-assessment.doc>

<https://www.defence.gov.au/AGSVA/resources/fact-sheet-nv2-clearance-assessment.doc>

11. What if the program isn't right for me? Can I leave part way through?

Host departments and the Office of the Chief Scientist will provide support to fellows, and may be able to move fellows into a new role within the host department. You can also exit the program if you wish to return to your previous role.

Eligibility Questions

12. Do I have to have a PhD?

Scientists in medical and health sciences; biological, physical, or earth sciences, behavioural sciences, or computational sciences and mathematics are required to have a terminal scientific degree (PhD, ScD, MD, DVM, etc.) in order to apply for a Fellowship.

You do not need to have a PhD if you have a Masters degree in any field of engineering plus a minimum of three years of professional engineering experience (not including further academic studies).

13. Who is the ideal candidate for a Science Policy Fellowship?

Our ideal candidate will have significant scientific expertise and a genuine interest to work for government and develop skills and experience in public policy.

Fellows come from many different disciplines in science and engineering, and can come from academia, industry, and the not-for-profit sector. The program is targeted at early-to-mid career research scientists and engineers who are no more than 15 years post-PhD.

14. Is previous experience in public policy necessary?

No, but it is important that you convey an understanding of, and interest in, government and public policy. Host departments expect and understand that Fellows will be new to the Australian Public Service (APS).

Candidates should be prepared to speak about how their expertise and skill set might relate to policy issues, and how they can be applied in government decision-making.

15. I am completing my doctorate after the application deadline but before the Fellowship year starts. Can I still apply?

No. The degree requirements must be met before applications close. If that is your situation, you may wish to apply for a Commonwealth department graduate program.

16. What if I have completed all of my requirements for my doctorate, but my degree will not be conferred until after applications close?

You may be accepted into the program prior to your degree being conferred, provided all degree requirements have been met before applications close, including dissertation defence and any revisions (as applicable). In this situation, you would need to provide a letter from your committee chair (or equivalent appropriate official) verifying that you have satisfied all requirements for the PhD or equivalent degree.

17. Do I have to be an Australian Citizen?

Yes. Australian Citizenship is required for all participants.

18. May I apply if I am not yet an Australian Citizen but I expect to have my citizenship before the Fellowship year begins?

No. Applicants to the Fellowship program must have Australian Citizenship at the time of application.

19. I don't have a PhD, is there a Fellowship program for undergraduate or graduate students?

There is currently no Fellowship specifically for undergraduate or graduate students, however most Commonwealth Government departments and agencies run a Graduate Program. Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to apply for one of these positions.

New PhD graduates may also consider applying for a departmental graduate program.

20. I am an Australian Public Service (APS) employee, am I eligible to apply?

APS employees that are employed in a research role in a Commonwealth research institution are eligible to apply. However, if you are an APS employee in a policy or program role, you are not eligible as you are already embedded in the policymaking process.

[Application Process](#)

21. How do I prepare a competitive application?

Read the program and applicant information to ensure you have a good understanding of the Fellowship program, including the eligibility requirements, selection criteria and the application instructions.

Allow time to develop a comprehensive, well-presented, and polished candidate statement and other required documents (ensuring you adhere to the page and word limits indicated in the application form).

Contact your referees early so they have time to prepare thoughtful letters of recommendation.

If you're invited for an interview, come prepared to articulate your interests and background, and discuss how your experience relates to policy, and your interest in and understanding of the policy process.

22. What happens if one or more of my letters of recommendation arrive late or not at all?

All required information must be received by the application deadline. Incomplete applications (including applications that do not include two recommendation letters) are ineligible and will not be considered.

23. When will I be notified about the status of my application?

Expect to be contacted in late January/early February of the outcome of the short-listing process and if you have been selected for interview. Once interviews have been concluded, candidates will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

24. If I am successful, do I have a say in where I am placed for the program?

While candidates may express a preference for a position or host department, the host department will have final say and will offer positions to suitable candidates.

Candidate preferences are only one input used in the process to match hosts with fellows. The OCS will work to ensure all successful candidates are offered a placement, which could mean that the host department for a candidate may change during the placement process.

25. If I am not successful, can I re-apply for the Program in future years?

Yes, as long as the program is offered in future years. There is no limit on the number of times you may apply in subsequent years.

26. May I receive feedback on my application or interview?

Feedback will only be provided for candidates shortlisted for interview.

27. Can I contact host departments for more information e.g. to discuss the roles offered?

Please direct all enquiries to OCS-projects@chiefscientist.gov.au. The Office of the Chief Scientist will handle all inquiries and direct them to host departments as appropriate.

28. Can I contact current or alumni Fellows to ask questions about their experience?

The Office of the Chief Scientist is happy to connect potential applicants with current and alumni Fellows. Please direct all requests to OCS-projects@chiefscientist.gov.au