

Dear Head of Department,

THE STFC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

Professor John Womersley's e-mail of 21 December 2009 informed you of STFC's decision to realign its level of support for fellowships and studentships in 2010, following the announcement of STFC's five-year investment strategy and a consequent 25% reduction in the funding provision for new studentships and fellowships from 2010/11. Specifically, the current round of postdoctoral fellowships was cancelled in order to preserve as far as possible the number of new PhD studentships and advanced fellowship awards in 2010. As a result the numbers of new awards this year are 235 studentships and 12 advanced fellowships. This compares to the expected numbers of 260 studentships, 12 postdoctoral fellowships and 12 advanced fellowships.

STFC undertook to consult with the community over options for the future support of fellowships and studentships, in 2011 and beyond, and the STFC's Education, Training and Careers Committee has discussed possible detailed options for consideration.

In developing the options it was considered that it would not be desirable to propose an option which resulted in fewer than 195 studentships per annum on average. This is because any average lower than 195 would represent a reduction to the studentships line in excess of 25%. It was also considered that support for a fellowships scheme would not be viable at fewer than 10 annual awards, owing to the burden on the peer review system and the low success rate for applicants (the average success rate in recent years across both fellowship schemes is 6.5% of those applications submitted to STFC, i.e. applications which have passed through the departmental quota stage).

STFC is seeking your views on the three options described below. These show the numbers of fellowships and studentships that could be supported under each scenario within the planned budget. For ease of reference, the studentship numbers are shown as a rounded, four-year average (the actual numbers would differ slightly in some years). The options include one which would permit an increase in advanced fellowship numbers from the current 12 annual awards to 14 (Option 2) and another allowing the reinstatement of the postdoctoral fellowships scheme from 2011, if desired (Option 3). Under each option we are planning to operate the CASE scheme at a reduced level of 5 awards per annum.

Option 1: Zero postdoctoral fellowships; 12 advanced fellowships; 220 students per annum on average; 5 CASE students per annum.

Option 2: Zero postdoctoral fellowships; 14 advanced fellowships; 210 students per annum on average; 5 CASE students per annum.

Option 3: 10 postdoctoral fellowships; 10 advanced fellowships; 195 students per annum on average; 5 CASE students per annum.

STFC would welcome your comments on the above, including your preferred choice of option. Please respond by e-mail to studentships@stfc.ac.uk by a deadline of 18 March 2010. Your response should comprise a consolidated reply on behalf of the department (STFC is not seeking responses from individual members of departmental staff).

The responses received will be presented to the Education, Training and Careers Committee's meeting on 26 March 2010.

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