SPHERE TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SCHEME

ROUND 1 (2019-2021)

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

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“working together to promote better health and wellbeing for our community”
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## Glossary

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LHD</td>
<td>Local Health District</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPHERE</td>
<td>Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRI</td>
<td>Medical Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRFS</td>
<td>Translational Research Fellowship Scheme</td>
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<td>TRF</td>
<td>Translational Research Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHRTC</td>
<td>Advanced Health Research and Translational Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHD</td>
<td>Local Health District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full Time Equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health Medical Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOI</td>
<td>Expressions of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRTC</td>
<td>Health Research Translation Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Intellectual Property</td>
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</table>

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Winston Churchill
## Definitions

**Translational Research**
Refers to health and medical research that builds on basic or fundamental scientific research to create new or advance existing therapies, procedures, diagnostic tests or models of care. This includes: treatment and intervention development (T1); testing efficacy and effectiveness of treatments and interventions (T2).

**Research (knowledge) translation**
Refers to the notion of moving research findings into practice. It involves dissemination and implementation research for system-wide change (T3 - T4).

**Healthcare Professional/ Clinician**
Refers to medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals and those dedicated to clinical management, health service delivery, public & population health, epidemiology, health informatics, health economics and health policy. Also refers to a health professional dedicated to patient care. This includes but is not limited to, those from the medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health professions.

**Research Active Clinical Units**
Clinical units that demonstrate a commitment to embedding clinical research into practice, in that they:
- Currently hold competitive grant funding
- Are actively engaged in a productive clinical research program, have
- Senior clinician researchers within the unit who have a strong track record of successfully supervising research higher degree student and post-doctoral fellows, and have
- The necessary infrastructure to support clinical research activities

**Early-Mid Career/ Clinician Researcher**
Individual active in clinical practice who is currently undertaking translational research as part of or equivalent to a research higher degree, (based on publication out-put).

**Infrastructure Funding**
Funding available to support the direct research costs of the project that includes the purchase and maintenance of essential equipment, consumables, purchase and maintenance of animals, project licenses, publication costs etc.
Supervisor/Supervisory Team  Have a proven track record in being able to successfully supervise research higher degree students or research fellows.

Currently leading/participating in active and productive research program(s).

Research Outputs  Peer review papers, academic papers, completed experiments and or trials, pilot projects, clinical guidelines, new process, disclosures and patents.

End-users  Includes other research that may use your results, policy makers, government organisation, healthcare providers, patients and industry.

SPHERE health service partners  Includes South West Sydney Local Health District, South East Sydney Local Health District, Sydney Children’s Hospital Network (Randwick) and St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney.
1. Introduction

In recognising that evidenced-based healthcare and improved patient outcomes are intrinsically linked to translating clinical research into healthcare policy and practice, SPHERE together with its partner Local Health Districts (SWSLHD and SESLHD) and Specialty Networks (SCHN and SVNH), are providing an opportunity to support Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians to undertake clinical research training.

SPHERE, in collaboration with health service partners, is introducing the SPHERE Translational Research Fellowship Scheme (TRFS) to respond to the SPHERE strategic plan to position for the future by facilitating multidisciplinary innovation, education and research. The inaugural round of the SPHERE TRFS will commence in January 2019.

The SPHERE TRFS represents SPHERE’s commitment to:

1. Creating a strong culture of continuous improvement that delivers the best and most efficient evidence-based healthcare for people within the SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks.

2. Supporting and promoting excellence in health and medical research by encouraging collaboration between academia, SPHERE health partners and patient care facilities within the LHDs and Specialty Networks. A collaborative model that will enable bidirectional interchange and leveraging, strengthening SPHERE’s capacity to be competitive in seeking external grants and increasing its ability to build a Centre of global relevance.

3. Encouraging and supporting Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians across all disciplines to increase their research activity and capacity whilst undertaking high quality, clinically relevant research; with research findings to be implemented into policy and practice to improve the health outcomes for people locally, nationally and internationally.

4. Embedding a research culture into all aspects of healthcare delivery within SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks that supports SPHERE’s vision to advance the delivery of healthcare and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

2. Background

Over the past decade there has been sustained and widespread discussion, both nationally and internationally related to the declining number of Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians actively engaged in research and the negative impact this is having on sustaining a culture of evidence-informed practice at the bedside including expediting the translation of research findings into policy and practice (1). Barriers to Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians undertaking clinical research have been documented as; funding bodies’ historical bias for bench science over clinical science (2); limited protected time and space for Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians to conduct clinical research (3); limited access to clinical trial coordinators; negligible institutional
support or funding; and limited access to senior clinical academics who can supervise and mentor emerging Healthcare Professional/Clinician researchers (4).

In response to this “crisis in academic health care” (4), health services and governing agencies worldwide have implemented various initiatives to redress the issue. The underlying premise of these initiatives rests largely on the expansion of clinical and translational research agendas to include research (5) that is “grounded in, informed by, and intended to improve practice”(6). There is a strong view within the literature that suggests clinical research provides “the essential link between bench discoveries, bedside efficacy, and everyday clinical effectiveness”(7).

In an attempt to translate research findings into improved health outcomes and system efficiencies, there has been a trend nationally and internationally to establish integrated health research and translational centres (8). In Australia this has recently been realised through the establishment of Advanced Health Research and Translation Centre (AHRTC). These centres, endorsed by the National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC), demonstrate an ability to combine research excellence with healthcare service, by working collaboratively to integrate clinical research, training, education and service delivery (9).

It is well recognised that a key determinant of health service providers participating in this renewed research agenda is to identify, support and develop Healthcare Professional/Clinician researchers. In response to this, initiatives to encourage and support Healthcare Professional/Clinicians to undertake clinically relevant research have proliferated. These initiatives typically make provisions to sanction funds, by way of establishing clinical research scholarships or fellowships that enable Healthcare Professional/Clinicians to be released from their clinical responsibilities whilst they undertake high-quality, clinically relevant research projects. This capacity building model for clinician researchers has been widely implemented throughout Australia.

SPHERE together with its partner LHDs and Specialty Networks introduce the SPHERE TRFS to support our vision to become;

“A world class Academic Health Science Partnership across Sydney and NSW that integrates diverse health disciplines and professions to address unmet local, national and international health priorities and needs through collaboration, innovation and partnership”

3. The SPHERE Translational Research Fellowship Scheme

3.1 The Purpose of the Fellowships

The purpose of the SPHERE TRFS is to:

- Build a clinical academic workforce by supporting Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians (across all disciplines), employed within SPHERE partner LHD or Specialty Network
Research Active Units, to conduct translational research whilst undertaking formal research training e.g. MD, PhD.

- Enable high-quality clinically relevant research that aligns with LHD or Specialty Network strategic priorities to improve patient, health outcomes and service efficiencies locally, nationally and internationally.

- Build the capacity and proficiency of Health Professional/Clinician researchers, across all disciplines within SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks, supporting those who wish to advance their career by integrating clinical and research activities in the pursuit of clinical excellence.

- Embed a culture of research and innovation within SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks whereby research activity becomes integral to the provision of best practice clinical care.

### 4. Who Should Apply

The SPHERE TRFS is intended to support Healthcare Professionals/Clinicians employed within Research Active Units across SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks to undertake high-quality, clinically relevant research.

#### 4.1 Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible for SPHERE TRFS applicants should be:

- An Australian citizen or permanent resident (evidence to support permanent residency must be provided) committed to residing in the SPHERE partner LHD/Specialty Network region for the duration of the fellowship.

- Employed within a SPHERE partner LHD or Specialty Network as a Healthcare Professional/Clinician within a research active unit and be able to satisfy the selection committee that they can maintain a level of clinical contact within their substantive position whilst concurrently devoting ample time to the Fellowship so that all SPHERE TRFS objectives will be achieved. (Note: it is the responsibility of the Fellow to secure and retain clinical employment within the SPHERE partner LHD/Specialty Network)

- Supported by his/her Department Head and Service Manager to be released from clinical duties for a substantial, no less than 60% of their full time equivalent (FTE) dedicated to research for the duration of the Fellowship. Time committed to clinical duties must not exceed research fellowship FTE (i.e. 40% clinical, 60% research)

- Supported by a supervisor/supervisory team from within a SPHERE partner LHD or Specialty Network Research Active Unit committed to providing the necessary infrastructure and supports to oversee the project, ensuring research project feasibility, and progress to publication outputs
• Supervised by an established senior clinical academic

• Engage in the mentorship opportunities facilitated by the SPHERE TRFS

• Able to demonstrate a capacity to undertake translational research evidenced by; a strong understanding of research ethics and governance; a sound track record (relative to opportunity) of disseminating research findings by publishing in peer-reviewed journals, books, delivering papers at conference and/or obtaining competitive research grant funding

• Able to demonstrate a quality research proposal that aligns with SPHERE partner LHD or Specialty Network key strategic priorities; underpinned by a commitment to translational research (T1-T4) that has the potential to improve health, patient and service efficiency outcomes

• Able to demonstrate the potential for multidisciplinary healthcare and Healthcare Professional/Clinician involvement within the research project, providing opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations and engagement/research capacity building of other Healthcare Professionals/ Clinicians (e.g. Students/Trainees)

• Able to demonstrate that all relevant approvals e.g. institutional, governance and ethics for the proposed study have been secured

• A Healthcare Professional/Clinician with a research Master’s degree (or equivalent), enrolled in, or planning to enroll in a research higher degree (e.g. PhD)
  
  or
  
  o A Medical graduate in the later stages of specialist training, or planning to enroll in formal research training e.g. MD or PhD
  
  or
  
  o A Healthcare Professional/Clinician who has completed a research higher degree (PhD), or equivalent (through research track record and productivity) within the past 5 years
  
  or
  
  o An experienced Healthcare Professional/Clinician with a strong research track record demonstrated by - current role in undertaking clinical research, disseminating research findings through publications and conference presentations and/or gaining competitive research grant funding

5. Funding

Funding for the fellowships have been made available through the SPHERE Partnership where each partner organisation contributes financial support to programs and strategic platforms endorsed by the SPHERE council. The SPHERE TRFS is a component of the SPHERE Workforce Development Strategic Platform.
The SPHERE partners are:

- University of New South Wales
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Western Sydney University
- South West Sydney Local Health District
- South East Sydney Local Health District
- St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney
- Sydney Children’s Hospital Network (Randwick)
- Garvan Institute of Medical Research
- Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute
- Neuroscience Research Australia
- Ingham Institute of Applied Medical Research
- Children’s Cancer Institute
- Black Dog Institute
- Centre for Eye Health

Other than the annual allocation of $5000 towards direct research costs, funding for the Fellowships will only be used for salary support of the Fellowship. The amount of funding offered will be determined by the FTE nominated by the applicant to be directed towards the proposed research project.

Research Active Clinical Units within SPHERE partner LHDs and Specialty Networks are encouraged to consider co-funding applicants applying for the TRFS, thereby contributing to a proportion of the fellowship cost.

Successful applicants are also encouraged to apply for additional competitive grants, or grants-in-aid from funding bodies e.g. APA Scholarships, NHMRC Postgraduate Medical Scholarships.

Successful applicants in the early post-doctoral phase are expected to apply for competitive post-doctoral fellowships at the appropriate time point during their SPHERE TRF.

5.1 Allocation of Funding

Whilst the SPHERE Translational Research Fellowships will be offered annually, the number of Fellowships available each year will vary subject to available funds. The Fellowship funding will make provisions for:

1. Salary support, commensurate with the Fellow’s substantive clinical position (at base-rate), to a maximum of $100,000 per annum, including on-costs, for 3 years. A possible extension (up to 6 months) will be available subject to: approval from the SPHERE Executive Director and demonstrated satisfactory annual progress.

2. Infrastructure funding for direct research costs to a maximum of $5,000 per annum.

The relevant LHD or Specialty Network business units will be responsible for managing any fellowship funds awarded to their organisation. Funding agreements between SPHERE and the administering LHD or Specialty Network will be developed for each individual Fellowship.
awarded. The relevant business unit will enter into secondary agreement with their internal payroll and/or clinical department. No additional allowances or claims may be made.

Equipment that is purchased with Fellowship funds will remain the property of the LHD or Specialty Network Research Active Unit supporting the Fellowship.

Fellowship funding that is used for purposes other than that for which it was awarded, or is unspent at the conclusion of the Fellowship, will be recoverable by LHD or Specialty Network and returned to the Fellowship fund.

6. Selection Procedures

The SPHERE TRFS is prestigious and highly competitive, and as such, all applications will be subjected to a rigorous review process. The selection process will consist of three stages with funding being awarded to the highest scoring application(s) judged according to:

- The quality of the proposed research project
- The track record of the applicant relative to research experience and opportunity
- The availability of committed supports from Supervisors/Supervisory teams within LHD or Specialty Network Research Active Units who demonstrate a capacity to oversee the project and ensure high-quality supervision, research progress and research outputs (publications, presentations, leveraged funds)
- The significance of the project and its relevance to LHD or Specialty Network
- The likelihood that the proposed study will successfully be translated into improved patient outcomes through innovation or change to existing guidelines, or policies and/or representing world-leading health and medical research
- The capacity of the applicant to develop into a leadership role as a Healthcare Professional/Clinician researcher within LHD or Specialty Network

6.1 Stage One: Expression of Interest

Applicants will be invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for evaluation by the SPHERE TRFS Selection Committee. The SPHERE TRFS Selection Committee reserves the right to co-opt specialist representatives for the review of EOI. Following EOI evaluation, applicants will be informed as to whether their proposal has been short-listed to progress to Stage Two.

6.2 Stage Two: Application

Applicants whose EOI is short-listed will be invited to submit a full application to the SPHERE TRFS Selection Committee. A selection committee consisting of both internal and external reviewers will assess applications. Applicants should inform the committee in writing if there are external reviewers who they do NOT want to review their application, and/or any special requirements or provisions required in relation to intellectual property or confidential material contained in the application. Applications will be judged and ranked according to criteria detailed in Table 1- Domains for Assessment.
6.3 Stage Three: Panel Interview and Presentation

Applicants short-listed during stage two will be invited to attend a short interview with a selection of internal and external reviewers. Interview questions will be targeted toward providing the interview panel with information about career and research history, the proposed study, future career and research aspirations.

Table 1 Domains for Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>SCIENTIFIC QUALITY OF THE PROPOSAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>OF THE FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES PROPOSED.</td>
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<td>Including study rationale, design, methodology, feasibility &amp; timeframes. Is the study well informed by the literature? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study &amp; its design? Have potential problems been identified? What is the significance of the proposed study? Does the study align with LHD/Specialty Network’s strategic priorities? Is the problem important? What is the likelihood that the research findings from the study can be translated into policy and/or practice? What is the potential of the study being able to leverage for additional funding, national and/or international collaborations, how the research activities proposed will develop the applicant’s clinical academic career?</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORGANISATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the applicant have a designated and accessible supervisor(s)/ supervisory team with a strong track record of actively engaging in clinical research and successfully mentoring research higher degree students or research fellows? Does the nominated supervisor(s) &amp; Research Active Unit have a strong track record of active and productive research programs? Does the nominated research unit have the necessary research funding and infrastructure to successfully support the fellow and the proposed study? Is there potential for the nominated Research Active Unit to co-fund the applicant for the Fellowship?</td>
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<td>APPLICANTS TRACK RECORD &amp; FUTURE POTENTIAL WITHIN HEALTH RESEARCH</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the applicant display qualities of academic intellect, demonstrated through academic achievement? Has the applicant undertaken formal research training? Does the applicant display qualities of leadership demonstrated through professional achievements (clinical, research, or health service duties)? Does the applicant have potential for research career development as demonstrated by the applicant’s response to, reasons for applying and future goals and aspirations related to health research? Relative to opportunity and experience, does the applicant demonstrate an appreciation for clinical/translational research evidenced by; undertaking, and/or participating in clinical research projects, publishing and/or applying for competitive research grant funding, disseminating research findings through conference presentations and/or instrumental in leading the uptake of evidence into clinical practice by contributing to policy and/or practice reform?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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7. Outcome of Application

Applicants will be notified of the outcome within two weeks of their interview.
Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the SPHERE partner LHD or Specialty Network where they are employed. Unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback from the SPHERE TRFS Selection Committee.

The decision of the SPHERE TRFS Selection Committee is final and no correspondence regarding the outcome of the Fellowship applications will not be entered into.

8. Multiple Submissions

Prospective fellows are encouraged to contest for NSW Office for Health and Medical Research supported fellowships and the relevant NHMRC fellowship opportunities (Postgraduate Scholarships, Early Career Fellowships, Practitioner Fellowships, TRIP Fellowships) in parallel with their applications to SPHERE. SPHERE envisage that the SPHERE TRFS will build productivity and track record that will lead to state and national competitive fellowship success.

9. Intellectual Property

All intellectual property (IP) generated as a result of research funding will be managed in accordance with NSW Health IP Arising from Health Research policy.

10. Conditions of Award

Successful applicants must accept the offer of the award by the date nominated by the selection committee. In accepting an offer, applicants must:

- Read and sign the terms and conditions of the SPHERE TRFS, including being employed under the NSW Health Awards for the Fellowship proportion
- Be aware that the SPHERE Executive Director needs to be, informed in writing, of any variation to the original research proposal
- Be aware that extensions to the project completion date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, with a maximum extension of 6 months
- Any request to amend the grant or the terms must be made in writing to the SPHERE Executive Director

11. Responsibility of Fellows

11.1 Progress Reports

All successful Fellows will be required to produce a work plan within four weeks of receiving the fellowship and submit annual progress reports to the SPHERE Executive Director. Failure of the Fellow to demonstrate progress may result in the withdrawal of the Fellowship funding.
one-hour interview may be requested at the discretion of the SPHERE Executive Director to discuss study progress and interim research findings.

A final report must be submitted to the SPHERE Executive Director within three months of completion or termination of the Fellowship. The final report should address:

I. The objectives of the project
II. The extent to which the objectives were achieved
III. The research results and benefits, including evidence of improved patient, health, and/or service efficiency outcomes
IV. The titles of published papers and invited conference presentations (locally, nationally and internationally)
V. An acquittal statement of the expenditure of funds, certified by the relevant Business Unit Manager

11.2 Publications/Presentations

Fellows are expected to publish at least one manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal within the first year of the Fellowship, and two per year thereafter until the completion of the Fellowship. Fellows are also expected to disseminate their work at appropriate research, clinical forums and conferences.

11.3 Acknowledgement

Any dissertation, thesis or publication resulting from the research undertaken during the fellowship must acknowledge SPHERE and its partner organisations.

12. How to Apply

- Download the following guidelines and application forms the SPHERE health partner websites:
  - Guidelines
  - Instructions and Application Procedures Round 1
  - Expressions of Interest Round 1
  - SPHERE TRFS Final Application Round 1

- Full applications should include:

  1. A Curriculum Vitae, that should include:
     a. a 300-word track record statement focusing on relevant clinical research achievements over the past 5 years,
     b. your current and previous appointments,
     c. certified copies of your academic transcript(s),
     d. degrees, prizes, awards,
     e. collaborations,
     f. presentations (local, national and international),
g. evidence of research independence,
h. scientific discipline involvement (membership, committees, editorial boards etc.),
i. community involvement,
j. research support (past, current),
k. publications,
l. details of any other current research applications including funding agencies and project titles

2. Inclusion of the statement of support from applicant’s Line Manager, Department Head, Service Manager and General Manager (as per section 12 of the full application form).

3. Inclusion of the statement of support and intent to provide supervision from Principal Supervisor (as per section 12 of the full application form).

- It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that all line managers and department heads are communicated with throughout the EOI stage and that agreements are completed and included in the full application.

- Please submit an electronic copy of all documents in PDF format (electronic signatures will be accepted) to SPHERE-TRFS@unsw.edu.au only electronic submissions will be accepted; incomplete or late submissions will not be accepted.

Enquiries regarding the Fellowship scheme should be directed to: SPHERE-TRFS@unsw.edu.au

13. Important Dates

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Call for Expressions of Interest</td>
<td>30-Aug-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for Expression of Interest</td>
<td>20-Sep-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notification of Shortlisting and Invitation to submit full application</td>
<td>04-Oct-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for submission of full application</td>
<td>15-Nov-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed Interview Date</td>
<td>TBC– 6-14-Dec-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notification of Successful Applicants</td>
<td>20-Dec-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commencement Date of Fellowship</td>
<td>Feb-2019</td>
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</table>
15. References