

Centennial Fellowships Committee

General Description

- Committee is standing
- Number of members is seven
- Term is two years ending 30 June (Work actually begins in December.)

Principal Activities

To review applications and rank the top applicants for the award of fellowships as far as the money will go. Committee members may not serve as reference writers for Centennial Fellowship applicants.

Other Activities

To consider questions of policy on fellowships and to assist in solicitation of funds.

Although the committee numbers seven, it is augmented by panelists chosen when the fields of applicants are known, so that the augmented group represents the appropriate distribution of mathematical expertise.

When the fellowships were established, they were for immediate postdoctoral candidates, interpreted as ordinarily no more than four years past the Ph.D. Beginning with the competition of December 1983, the fellowship was changed to one for persons in early mid-career, interpreted as ordinarily four to ten years past the Ph.D. and of rank below professor. It has been changed many times since then.

Beginning with the competition of 1990/1991, the fellowship was changed as follows:

1. The age group would be set at seven (7) to twelve (12) years past Ph.D. or equivalent degree.
2. The Fellowship would be open to any rank.
3. In the instructions to the Selection Committee and in the announcements that are published, the words, “the selection committee WILL give preference to applicants who have not had extensive postdoctoral fellowship support” will be included.

In August 1995 the eligibility criteria were changed again, targeting more recent Ph.D.s. The fellowship was limited to citizens or permanent residents of a country in North America, who will have held a doctoral degree for at least two years at the time of the award, who do not have permanent tenure, and who will have held less than two years of research support at the time of the award..

Beginning with the competition of the 2001/02, the rules became:

“The primary selection criterion for the Centennial Fellowship is the excellence of the candidates research. Candidates for the fellowship should submit a cogent plan indicating how they would use the fellowship. The plan should include travel to at least one other institution and should demonstrate that the fellowship will be used for more than a reduction of teaching at the candidate’s home institution. The selection committee will

consider the plan in addition to the quality of the candidate's research, and will try to award the fellowship to those for whom the award would make a real difference in the development of their research careers. Work in all areas of mathematics, including interdisciplinary work, is eligible. Preference will be given to candidates who have not had extensive fellowship support in the past.

Recipients may not hold the Centennial Fellowship concurrently with another research fellowship such as a Sloan or NSF Postdoctoral fellowship. Under normal circumstances, the fellowship cannot be deferred.

A recipient of the fellowship shall have held his or her doctoral degree for at least three years and not more than twelve years at the inception of the award and shall be a citizen or permanent resident of a country in North America.”

“Fellowship holders may use their stipend as full support for a year, or may combine it with half-time teaching and use it as half support over a two-year period. Applications shall include a short research plan describing both an outline of the research to be pursued and a program for using the fellowship, including institutions at which it will be used and reasons for the choices.

The selection committee will base its decision on both the research potential of the applicant based upon track record and letters of recommendation and the quality and feasibility of the research plan.”

Then in 2013 The Council made two mild changes in the eligibility criteria. First, the second paragraph in the preceding award parameters was changed to read:

Recipients may not hold the Centennial Fellowship concurrently with another major research award such as a Sloan fellowship, NSF Postdoctoral fellowship or CAREER award. Under normal circumstances, the fellowship cannot be deferred.

Second, the following general principle was adopted:

For any program, fellowship, prize or award that has a maximum period of eligibility after receipt of the doctoral degree, the selection committee may use discretion in making exceptions to the limit on eligibility for candidates whose careers have been interrupted for reasons such as family or health.

Miscellaneous Information

The Committee conducts its business by email and teleconferencing and does not require any travel.

Note to the Chair

Work done by committees with recurring agenda items may have value as precedent or work done may have historical interest. Because of this, the Council has requested that a central file system be maintained for the Society by the Secretary. Committees are reminded that records of work should be kept and submitted annually to the Secretary for archival purposes. Confidential material should be noted, so that it can be handled in a confidential manner.

Authorization

Council minutes of January 24, 1973, p.6

“research fellowships, to be awarded strictly on the basis of mathematical merit and to supported by a combination of appropriated Society funds and solicited funds.” ECBT minutes of June 6-7, 1975, item 30.

“Candidates for an AMS Postdoctoral fellowship shall be citizens or permanent residents of a country in North America.” Coun. Min. 4/14/83, item 4.2; ECBT 5/18/89, item 2.23; ECBT Min. 5/95, item 2.3.1; Coun. Min. 8/5/95, item 3.5.1; Coun. Min. 1/9/01, item 4.6.2; Coun. Min 1/8/13, Items 4.6.1&2; updated 7/94; 6/95; 11/95; 8/09. 12/13 Notes, Misc Info, membership

15 January 2019 Council Minutes, Item 4.7.2. Added the phrase “Committee members may not serve as reference writers for fellowship applicants.”

Past Members

A list of current and past members is available here:

<http://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/committees/centfellow-past.html>

Past Winners

<https://www.ams.org/profession/prizes-awards/pabrowse?purl=centennial-fellow>

AMS Website

<https://www.ams.org/programs/ams-fellowships/centennial-fellow/emp-centflyer>

<https://www.ams.org/profession/prizes-awards/ams-awards/centennial-fellow>