

FOR THEY ARE JOLLY GOOD FELLOWS

Following the IBMS's creation of a new Experiential Route to Fellowship last year, we speak with three new Fellows who have all successfully applied this way.

Professional recognition; a career boost; personal satisfaction; an opportunity to promote and support the IBMS; a chance to give something back: these are some of the benefits of being a Fellow of the Institute of Biomedical Science, as perceived by three individuals who have successfully applied through the new Experiential Route.

This new route was piloted last year to recognise the career achievements and success of biomedical scientists working at the highest level of their profession, for whom the traditional route, which requires either a Higher Specialist Diploma or a PhD, was not a good fit. It is already proving its worth, finds Daniel Kearns, Chief Biomedical Scientist and Histopathology Laboratory Manager at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham.

A career boost

He says becoming a Fellow at the end of February this year has already improved his

career prospects, allowing him to apply for the position of Cellular Pathology Manager within the hospital – a role which would also see him move up a band to 8b.

“A lot of jobs specify Fellowship as a requirement, so it is needed to progress to higher,” he says. “That’s certainly the case within my trust; there was a requirement to be a Fellow to reach the next grade.

“It is seen as a high standard. For an individual to meet the Institute’s criteria they have to demonstrate good understanding, good CPD, and good professional practice. I think that the NHS recognises that standard.”

Daniel began his career at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, becoming a registered Biomedical Scientist in 2006. He completed his Specialist Portfolio in Cellular Pathology and was promoted to Senior Biomedical Scientist in 2009, before taking on his current role in 2013.

He has been looking towards

Fellowship for a number of years, but because of the nature of his career progression, it wasn’t possible before.

“With the traditional route there are specific diplomas you need to complete in order to be eligible, but that didn’t really apply to my practice which progressed into a more managerial position, which was a disappointment,” he says.

“There wasn’t much point undertaking qualifications that won’t benefit you in your day-to-day work, so I’d hit a bit of a brick wall. But the new route to Fellowship was a good fit for me, and many others in a similar position.”

A role model

Daniel holds a number of responsibilities within the IBMS; he is a HCPC Registration Portfolio Assessor and Specialist Portfolio Examiner, and was recently co-opted onto the West Midlands Regional Committee for the Birmingham branch.

Becoming a Fellow aligns his professional standing with his working life, as well as cementing his commitment to the Institute, he says.

“This has put the Institute firmly back in the centre of things in my practice. I expect, as a Fellow, to behave in a slightly different way, and I’m keener to promote the work of the Institute and biomedical science in general.

“As you progress through the ranks in this profession, I think you are expected to behave more and more as a role model, and to inspire good practice in those coming up behind you; this is also recognition of that.”

He adds: “I think Fellowship will also put me in a better position to stand for different positions within the Institute, such as the specific advisory panels and Council.”

Recognition

Being an IBMS Fellow is undoubtedly a prestigious achievement and Fellows are proud to use the designatory



letters FIBMS – something which quickly communicates their level of experience and knowledge says Charlie Houston, Laboratory Sector Manager at North Glasgow Biochemistry, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

“The tangible benefit I perceive is being able to add the post-nominal letters FIBMS after your name, which allows people to recognise you as being at the highest practicing level of the profession,” he says.

“The intangible benefit is the professional recognition among peers and colleagues, not just within the profession, but without, among my medical colleagues as well.”

Charlie has had a broad career, which began in 1974 at what was then the Western Infirmary Glasgow, before he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, and spent 18 years working in laboratories around the world.

He has worked in private healthcare, and had a brief stint owning coffee shops, before returning to the NHS

and being promoted through to his current position.

Fellowship gives him an opportunity to “give something back to the profession”, and to the IBMS, after becoming a council member last year and having been an active branch member for some time.

“I want to be part of the IBMS to help steer the ship in the right direction. I love my job and my profession. To be able to be at the top of it feels good, there is an emotional benefit. “You can’t really quantify that,” he adds.

Personal satisfaction

Sarah Dack, Haematology BMS Professional Manager at Victoria Hospital, Fife, agrees.

“There is a sense of self-worth and satisfaction in having the job you’re doing recognised,” she adds. “It’s proving to yourself and others that you are working at that level, which you don’t really get the opportunity to do otherwise.”

Sarah graduated from De Montfort University in Leicester in 2002, and worked in haematology at St James’s University Hospital, Leeds, obtaining her masters at Manchester Metropolitan University. She progressed through roles at The Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield, before taking on her current role in 2013.

“It’s certainly worthwhile,” she adds. “And I think that if others, like me, want to set themselves that challenge, and have that recognition, that they should apply for Fellowship.”

The Experiential Route

This route is for individuals who are working in an advanced scientific or senior managerial role in the field of biomedical science with at least eight years of post-graduate experience, but who do not hold the IBMS Higher Specialist Diploma, Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice, or have a biomedical science-related PhD, together with five years of relevant professional experience.

Applicants must be able to show they are working at an advanced level in a role requiring judgement and leadership, and demonstrate a high level of specialist knowledge and awareness of current issues relevant to the delivery of their service.

They must continually be improving their knowledge, and show how they have made a wider contribution to the development and promotion of the biomedical science profession.

The minimum academic requirement is a UK Hons degree, or equivalent, in a biomedical science subject, and you do not need to be a current member to apply.

The process involves submitting an application form, with supporting personal statement of up to 1,500 words, along with a CV, a current job description and organisation chart, copies of educational certificates and a list of CPD activity over the previous two years.

The fee to apply for Fellowship via the Experiential Route is £325. 