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Recognising excellence: a guide to becoming a Fellow of ISBL

Updated October 2019

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the copy of the [application form on the ISBL website: https://isbl.org.uk/membership/isbl-fellowship.aspx](https://isbl.org.uk/membership/isbl-fellowship.aspx)

Update responsibility: Fellowship Assessment Panel (FAP) Secretariat

1. Introduction

Our objectives are:

- To formally recognise and raise awareness of excellent practice and expertise within the profession;
- To encourage the profession to aspire to excellence and higher standards of practice;
- To improve the practice of school business management by encouraging ongoing participation in professional development.

This guidance explains the benefits of, and application process for, becoming a ISBL Fellow.

2. Benefits of becoming a ISBL Fellow

By making an application to become a ISBL Fellow, you are applying to be recognised by your professional body as a proficient¹ school business professional, committed to the highest levels of professional and ethical practice.

If successful, you will become part of a diverse network of like-minded people who want to drive forward the standards of and build the reputation of the school business profession. You will be working alongside ISBL and our stakeholders to ensure that school leaders and governors fully recognise the contribution school business professionals make to school improvement and development.

Being recognised as a ISBL Fellow demonstrates that you are a leader within the profession, have achieved a high level of professional expertise and are committed to developing your knowledge and skills to meet the ever-changing demands of the education sector.

You are also showing your commitment to upholding the very highest ethical standards. ISBL will maintain a public register of our Fellows on our website and ISBL Fellows can use the designation FISBL after their name and on printed material.

ISBL Fellows will also receive:

- A ISBL Certificate
- An invitation to the next ISBL annual awards ceremony
- An invitation to an annual dedicated professional development event for ISBL Fellows
- An invitation to have your achievements showcased in The Voice, ISBL's member magazine.

3. Eligibility

ISBL encourages applications from school business professionals working in all school/trust settings who meet our requirements and comply with our Code of Ethics. You do not need to be a ISBL member already to apply but if you are accepted as a ISBL Fellow, you will become a ISBL member.

ISBL Trustees are eligible to apply. Please note that guidance does not apply to existing ISBL Fellows, who were recognised through the previous scheme.

¹ We are using the following definition of proficient: Having an advanced degree of competence in a vocation, profession, or branch of learning.

4. Requirements

To be recognised as a ISBL Fellow, you must:

1. Have at least three years' recent experience working at a senior level either within a school business or closely related business professional role which would confer eligibility²
2. Hold a qualification at Level 6³ or above in school business or in a subject which supports your professional practice in at least one of the following areas of school business:
 - a. Leading Support Services
 - b. Finance
 - c. Procurement
 - d. Infrastructure
 - e. HR
 - f. Marketing
3. Demonstrate significant experience and evidence of impact in two of the key areas listed below. **One of these areas must be Leading Support Services plus one other discipline from the list below.**
 - a. Finance
 - b. Procurement
 - c. Infrastructure
 - d. HR
 - e. Marketing
4. Provide evidence of ongoing commitment to, and impact of, continuing professional development (CPD).
5. Provide evidence of leadership within your school/trust and system leadership within the school business profession.
6. Demonstrate the highest standards of professional conduct.

4.1 How to meet these requirements

Prior to completing your application form, refer to section 7 below, and Appendices 1 and 2.

² Credit in terms of the number of years will be given either:

1. for those in a school business professional role or to those working in a business professional role who might not be a school business professional e.g. School Headship, or
2. where the applicant can provide sufficient evidence of their school business or business professional role which would relate to schools or the wider education sector if they have started a school role less than 3 years ago

³ An explanation of qualification levels is provided here: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>.

5. Application process

To demonstrate that you meet our requirements, you need to complete the Application Form and submit with it:

- a copy of your job description and your career summary or CV (for requirement 1)
- a copy of your qualification certificate(s), plus training and CPD completion (for requirement 2)
- evidence of your experience and impact in two key areas including LSS (requirement 3)
- a personal development plan (for requirement 4)
- a reference to show your leadership within your school/trust and system leadership within the school business profession (for requirement 5). Ensure this is either your line manager, headteacher or CEO (whoever is most relevant to you in your post)

The copy of the application form on the ISBL website clearly shows what you need to write and provides an additional reminder of the documents to attach. Also see Appendix 1.

Please ensure that you submit a hard copy and e-copy of your application. This is to ensure that ISBL holds back-up copies of your application in either format, thus maintaining the high standard of our applications storage process.

6. Submission of evidence

It is your responsibility to ensure that the evidence provided is complete and relevant to your application. If you feel the evidence might be relevant, please submit this with your application in the first instance rather than writing it is available on request.

When submitting evidence, please ensure you redact personal or otherwise private or sensitive information referring to and adhering to the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and Data Protection Act (2018). Whilst the ISBL FAP does not specifically score applications in relation to overall evidence quality, the FAP does consider that the provision of redacted evidence more readily facilitates the FAP scoring process and provides a sense of the applicants' awareness for data protection as a senior school leader.

Data Protection

In accordance with data protection regulations, ISBL retains applications and supporting evidence for 12 months after the date of submission in order to facilitate communications back to the applicant, support the provision of feedback regarding the application and its status following the FAP meeting, and to provide ISBL with evidence of the full application process in action. ISBL secure all applications in digital storage which is both encrypted and secured on the ISBL server.

ISBL returns original application forms and accompanying evidence in line with notification of FAP outcomes which is 28 days post FAP meeting.

ISBL reviews the full Fellowship process including those steps involved in applying, the FAP meeting, application scoring, storage and return of applications and evidence on an annual basis to ensure necessity, proportionality and compliance with GDPR.

If you require further information about the storage of your information or other matters relating to GDPR, please see our Privacy Notice on our Terms and Conditions page.

7. Style and use of evidence

ISBL is keen to emphasise the importance of clearly describing your work and providing evidence of your personal leadership and impact according to the requirements we state in section 4 above.

To clearly articulate your personal leadership and impact we suggest using terms like 'I did' 'I led' 'I worked on'. Applicants are reminded that the FAP panel is seeking evidence and assurance of your role, your experience, your impact and your individual contribution.

We would only suggest the use of 'we' within the context of describing overall projects or working i.e. for example, where a wider project or piece of strategic work might be underway within your school/trust, you can describe the wider project with the 'we' but show the elements you worked on as the 'I'.

For requirement 3, it is important that you consider the [ISBL Professional Standards](#) and discuss and evidence the two Professional Standards disciplines (one discipline must be Leading Support Services) with some breadth and depth. In addition, if you discuss and provide evidence of your working on an ISBL project or a project which ISBL is otherwise deployed on, ensure that you describe the project and provide the evidence in the same way you would if it was not a ISBL project.

For requirement 4, the ISBL Panel will assess mandatory/statutory CPD as adequate CPD. This would gain you a mark of 2/4 for that requirement. The Panel needs to see breadth and depth of CPD to confer potential eligibility for a mark higher than this. You can also refer to Appendix 1 below and our [CPD Policy](#) for further information on what counts as CPD.

8. Fees

Existing members

An assessment fee of £75 is charged to existing members to cover ISBL costs. You will be invoiced for this fee when you apply to become a ISBL Fellow. The charge incorporates the initial cost of administering your application, running the Fellowship Assessment Panel and the administration of your re-declaration (the redeclaration requires you every 3 years to state your CPD and commitment to upholding ISBL Values and Ethics).

Thereafter, and if successful with your Fellowship application, the annual membership fee for ISBL Fellows is £180.

If you are an existing ISBL member, your annual membership fee will increase to the rate described above, subject to your individual renewal date, meaning the Full member to Fellow fee increase might be immediate. Please note that ISBL membership fees are reviewed annually and may be increased.

Information about the benefits of ISBL membership and our Terms & Conditions is available on our website: <https://isbl.org.uk/Membership/Reasons-to-Join.aspx>

Non-members

An initial fee of £210 is charged to those applying for ISBL Fellowship who are not existing members. The charge incorporates one full year's ISBL membership at Full member rate, plus the Fellowship assessment fee of £75 as stated above. Thereafter, and if successful with your application, the annual membership fee for ISBL Fellows is £180.

9. Procedure for assessing applications

The two application windows each year are:

- October – March
- April – September.

Applications will be checked by ISBL staff to ensure that the correct information has been provided and that the assessment fee has been paid. All complete applications will then be subject to review by a panel made up of the ISBL Executive Director, existing ISBL Fellows and sector stakeholders. The panel will meet after the application window closing dates, in late April/ early May and late September/early October each year.

- **Successful applications**

If your application is successful, you will be notified by letter and receive a ISBL Fellowship Certificate, within 30 days of the panel meeting. Applications and supporting evidence can be returned to applicants if requested; otherwise ISBL will retain all applications for 12 months after the panel meeting. Thereafter all applications will be disposed of.

- **Unsuccessful applications**

If your application is not successful, you can request feedback and may be invited to join ISBL at another appropriate membership grade, if you are not already a member.

- **Borderline applications**

If the application receives a borderline mark (7 out of 12, where the pass mark is 8), you would be requested to send further narrative and supporting evidence in relation to the area(s) of the application which could be strengthened. Alongside the original application, this additional narrative and supporting evidence will then be reviewed by two members of ISBL office staff (with FAP experience) prior to a further decision on whether the application then reaches the required pass mark.

Those submitting additional narrative and evidence can expect a decision within 14 days of ISBL acknowledging receipt.

- **Appeals process**

You can appeal against an unsuccessful application, which will involve a referral to an independent panel, who will make a decision within 30 working days of receipt of the appeal.

10. Maintaining recognition as a ISBL Fellow

ISBL Fellows are required to confirm on a three-yearly basis that they continue to meet our requirements and our Code of Ethics.

Recognition as a ISBL Fellow will be revoked, subject to appeal, in the event of a Fellow being found to be complicit in proven malpractice⁴ or disqualified as a trustee or governor.

⁴ We are using the following definition of malpractice: illegal or unethical professional conduct or neglect of professional duty, which in the opinion of ISBL, or any review panel established by them, brings the profession or ISBL into disrepute.

11. Submitting your application

Applications should be sent to:

ISBL, 53 Butts, Coventry, CV1 3BH (also ensure you mark the envelope 'Fellowship application')

12. Further information

If you would to discuss whether you meet our eligibility requirements to be recognised as a ISBL Fellow, please ring 024 76231221 or email fellowship@isbl.org.uk.

Appendix 1: Meeting the six requirements

Requirements	How to meet the requirements
<p>1. Have at least three years' recent experience working at a senior level in a school business professional role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should have been a member of a school⁵ leadership team for at least the last three academic years. It does not have to be the same school for all three academic years. • There are no restrictions on job titles, but you must include a copy of your current (and, where appropriate, previous) job description(s) with your application, with evidence of your date(s) of appointment. • Write, in no more than 250 words, about your overall school business professional career. • Attach your up-to-date CV.
<p>2. Hold a qualification at Level 6⁶ or above in school business or in a subject which supports your professional practice in at least one of the following areas of school business: Leading Support Services Finance Procurement Infrastructure HR Marketing</p> <p>3. Demonstrate significant experience and evidence of impact in two of the key areas listed below: Leading Support Services Finance Procurement Infrastructure HR Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attach copies of your qualification certificate(s), training and CPD to your application. • There is no time limit for the achievement of the Level 6 qualification(s). • Submit a personal development plan, reflecting on your learning, performance and achievements and setting out your plans for professional growth. There is no prescribed format for this personal development plan. There is also a PDP example on the ISBL Fellowship webpage • List your qualifications, training and CPD <p>You will need to answer the following statement on the application form: Choose two disciplines from the ISBL Professional Standards and one must be Leading Support Services and tell us your experience and impact in these areas and provide evidence of this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Ensure you discuss each discipline with some breadth and depth.</u> ➤ <u>Ensure you send supporting evidence documents and refer to these documents within the narrative.</u> ➤ <u>If you discuss an ISBL project and provide evidence of your working on an ISBL project or a project which ISBL is otherwise deployed on, ensure that you describe the project and provide the evidence in the same way you would if it was not a ISBL project.</u> <p>If, for example, you lead on finances, perhaps you have an example of a finance report you wrote for your trustees to support their understanding of the financial position. For leading support services, perhaps you have led on school strategies, or perhaps policy development which you can provide documentary evidence for. Consider those examples which will allow you to provide evidence.</p>

⁵ School is used throughout the guidance as an umbrella term covering maintained schools, free schools, single academy trusts, multi-academy trusts, federations or other collaborative structures

⁶ An explanation of qualification levels is provided here: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>.

<p>4. Provide evidence of ongoing commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and the impact of this CPD for your role</p>	<p>You will need to answer the following statement on the application form:</p> <p>Tell us how your qualifications, training and CPD show your ongoing commitment to CPD <u>and</u> the impact of this CPD.</p> <p>For this section you must be able to demonstrate that you have regularly participated in CPD over the last three academic years to maintain and further develop your skills, show a Personal Development Plan which outlines this and future considerations <u>and</u> discuss the impact of this CPD.</p> <p>Mandatory/statutory CPD will gain half marks for this requirement. The Panel needs to see breadth and depth of CPD to confer potential eligibility for a mark higher than this. You can also refer to our CPD Policy for further information on what counts as CPD.</p> <p>Examples of qualifications, training and CPD: Eligible CPD can include: continuing education (part time, full time, distance learning) leading to qualifications; attending seminars, courses or workshops, including online courses and webinars; attending networking events; attending conferences and exhibitions; in-school training; coaching/mentoring; preparation/presentation of papers or workshops for conferences, meetings or publications; work shadowing, secondments, or on-the-job training; private study (e.g. reading school business management-related books or journals). We also have a CPD Policy which can refer to.</p>
<p>5. Provide evidence of leadership within your school/trust and system leadership within the school business profession.</p>	<p>You will need to answer the following statement on the application form:</p> <p>Tell us about your school and system leadership <u>and</u> provide evidence of this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a reference from your Headteacher/CEO/line manager (whoever is most relevant to you in your post) • Provide 2-3 key pieces of evidence • The key pieces of evidence might show for example, your establishing and/or taking a leadership role within local school business manager groups, contributing to the professional development of other school business management professionals, or establishing other collaborative arrangements. Send in documentary evidence of these activities e.g. emails, minutes.
<p>6. Demonstrate the highest standards of professional conduct.</p>	<p>Confirm by dating and signing Section 3: Declaration and Requirement 6 on the application form that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adhere to our Code of Ethics, published in Appendix 2. - Will declare if you are working in a school/trust which has received an ESFA malpractice investigation or a qualified audit report. This will not disqualify you but would lead to further investigation by ISBL.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirm that they have not been disqualified as a trustee or governor nor have been found complicit in any proven malpractice⁷. <p>Recognition as a ISBL Fellow will be revoked, subject to appeal, in the event of a Fellow being disqualified or found to be complicit in proven malpractice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition as a ISBL Fellow could be revoked in the event of a Fellow contravening the ISBL Code of Ethics (see Appendix 2).
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On completing your application form, ensure you check sections 4 and 5 on the form which provide a checklist to check you have included all the required supporting evidence, plus postal and email address details for submitting your application.

⁷ We are using the following definition of malpractice: illegal, or unethical professional conduct or neglect of professional duty, which in the opinion of ISBL, or any review panel established by them, brings the profession or ISBL into disrepute

Appendix 2

ISBL VALUES AND ETHICS

ISBL and its members are committed to demonstrating the highest standards of personal and professional conduct, to providing professional leadership in their schools and communities and to maintaining their professional competence. In all activities, school business management professionals should:

- Fulfil their professional responsibilities with honesty, integrity and objectivity, working within the limits of their professional competence;
- Comply with all statutory regulations and provisions;
- Pursue the good stewardship of school resources and refrain from using their position for personal gain;
- Not tolerate the failure of others to act in an ethical manner and pursue appropriate measures to correct such failures including whistleblowing if necessary;
- Make the wellbeing and improvement of the life chances of pupils a basic principle in all decision-making and actions;
- Have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they work;
- Treat pupils, parents/pupil carers, governors, community and staff members with dignity; building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observe proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position;
- Have regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing, in accordance with statutory provisions;
- Maintain the confidentiality of data and information;
- Maintain professional competence and seek to improve the effectiveness of their role through continuing professional development;
- Actively support local and national networking groups aimed at improving school business management, and encourage colleagues to do likewise;
- Never behave in a way that brings into question the integrity of the school business management profession.