

Recognising excellence: a guide to becoming a Fellow of ISBL

May 2022

**This guidance should be read in conjunction with
a copy of the ISBL Fellowship Application**

**Update responsibility: ISBL Nominations and Remuneration Committee
Next review May 2023**

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 professionals by encouraging ongoing participation in professional development

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

2 Benefits of becoming a Fellow of ISBL

By making an application to become a Fellow of ISBL, 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, 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 an 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 Fellows on its website, and ISBL Fellows can use the designation FISBL after their name and on printed material.

ISBL Fellows will also receive:

- An ISBL certificate (digital copy)
- An invitation to the National Schools Awards ceremony
- An invitation to the ISBL Fellow Forum, which meets six times per annum (virtually)
- An invitation to have your achievements showcased in The Voice, ISBL's member magazine.

3 Eligibility

We encourage 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 an ISBL member already to apply, but if you are accepted as an ISBL Fellow, you will become an ISBL member.

ISBL Trustees are eligible to apply.

4 Requirements

To be recognised as an 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 that would confer eligibility.² You should demonstrate through your application the transferability of these skills and the sector knowledge already developed.

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

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 that would relate to schools or the wider education sector, if they have started a school role less than three years ago.

2. hold a qualification at Level 6³ or above in school business or in a subject that supports your professional practice in at least one of the following areas of school business:
 - Leading Support Services
 - Finance
 - Procurement
 - Infrastructure
 - HR
 - Marketing
3. demonstrate significant experience, knowledge and skills, including evidence of individual impact, in the key area of **Leading Support Services** plus **one other area from the list below**:
 - Finance
 - Procurement
 - Infrastructure
 - HR
 - 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 appendix 1.

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, knowledge and skills, including impact, in two key areas including Leading Support Services (for 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 from your line manager, head teacher or CEO (whoever is most relevant to you in your post).

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 of this guidance.

Please ensure that you submit only an e-copy of your application.

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 stating it is available on request.

When submitting evidence, please ensure you redact personal or otherwise private or sensitive information in adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and Data Protection Act (2018). Whilst the ISBL Fellowship Assessment Panel does not specifically score applications in relation to overall evidence

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

quality, the Fellowship Assessment Panel does consider that the provision of redacted evidence more readily facilitates the Fellowship Assessment Panel scoring process and provides a sense of the applicant's awareness of data protection as a senior school leader.

6.1 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 Fellowship Assessment Panel meeting, and provide ISBL with evidence of the full application process in action. ISBL secures all applications in digital storage, which is both encrypted and secured on the ISBL server.

ISBL reviews on an annual basis the full Fellowship process including those steps involved in applying, the Fellowship Assessment Panel meeting, application scoring, storage and evidence 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 stated in section 4 above.

To clearly articulate your personal leadership and impact, we suggest using terms such as "I did", "I led" and "I worked on". Applicants are reminded that the Fellowship Assessment 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. 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 use of "we" but show the elements you worked on with the use of "I".

For requirement 3, it is important that you consider the ISBL [Professional Standards](#) and discuss and evidence the two Professional Standards disciplines (one of which 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 that 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 an ISBL project.

For requirement 4, the Fellowship Assessment Panel will assess mandatory/statutory CPD as adequate CPD. This would gain you a grade of "fail – requires further evidence". 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

8.1 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 an 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 re-declaration requires you every three years to state your CPD and commitment to upholding ISBL's Values and Ethics).

Thereafter, and if successful with your Fellowship application, the annual membership fee for ISBL Fellows is £189.

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-benefits/>

8.2 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 £189.

9 Procedure for assessing applications

The two application windows each year are:

- 1 October – 31 March
- 1 April – 30 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 Fellowship Assessment Panel comprising a member of the ISBL Executive Team, existing ISBL Fellows, and specialist sector stakeholders. The panel will meet after the application window closing dates, typically in early May and early October each year.

9.1 Successful applications

If your application is successful, you will be notified by email and receive a digital ISBL Fellowship Certificate within 30 days of the panel meeting. ISBL will retain all applications for 12 months after the panel meeting. Thereafter, all applications will be disposed of.

9.2 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.

9.3 Borderline applications

If the application is deemed by the panel to almost reach the required standard subject to the presentation of additional supporting evidence, you will be requested to send this further supporting evidence in relation to the area(s) of the application that could be strengthened. Alongside the original application, this additional supporting evidence will then be reviewed by two members of the Fellowship Assessment Panel prior to a further decision on whether the application then reaches the required pass mark.

Those submitting additional evidence can expect a decision within 15 working days of ISBL acknowledging receipt.

9.4 Appeals process

You can appeal against an unsuccessful application, which will involve a referral to an independent panel of Trustees selected from the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, who will make a decision within 30 working days of receipt of the appeal.

10 Maintaining recognition as an ISBL Fellow

ISBL Fellows are required to confirm through the ongoing maintenance of their ISBL CPD logs within their membership that they continue to meet our requirements and our Code of Ethics. We reserve the right to undertake annual audits of our members' records to ensure that individual CPD commitments, which are a condition of membership, are being met.

Recognition as an 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, or where they are not meeting their annual CPD commitment.

11 Submitting your application

Applications should be sent electronically to fellowship@isbl.org.uk.

12 Further information

If you want to discuss whether you meet our eligibility requirements to be recognised as an ISBL Fellow, please ring 024 76 231221 or email fellowship@isbl.org.uk.

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 ISBL, brings the profession or ISBL into disrepute.

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 or equivalent and demonstrate through your application the transferability of these skills and the sector knowledge already developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should have been a member of a school⁵ leadership team or equivalent 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 that supports your professional practice in at least one of the following areas of school business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading Support Services • Finance • Procurement • Infrastructure • HR • Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attach copies of your qualification certificate(s), training and CPD. • There is no time limit for the achievement of the Level 6 qualification(s). • Submit a personal development plan (PDP), 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 web page. • List your qualifications, training and CPD
<p>3. Demonstrate significant experience, knowledge and skills, including evidence of individual impact, in the key area of Leading Support Services plus one other area from the list below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Procurement • Infrastructure • HR • Marketing 	<p>You will need to answer the following statement on the application form: Choose two disciplines from the ISBL Professional Standards – one must be Leading Support Services (with particular emphasis on the role you play in strategic direction) – and tell us your experience and impact in these areas and provide evidence of this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you discuss each discipline with some breadth and depth. Typically expect no more than 500 words on each discipline area underpinned by referenced evidence documentation. • Ensure you send supporting evidence documents and refer to these documents within the narrative, with clear and careful referencing. • If you discuss an ISBL project/programme or DfE contract and provide evidence of your working on this activity, ensure that you describe the project and provide the evidence in the same way you would if it was not an ISBL project/programme or DfE contract. You must assume that your assessor has no prior knowledge. <p>If, for example, you lead on finance, 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 that 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>.

Requirements	How to meet the requirements
<p>4. Provide evidence of ongoing commitment to, and impact of, continuing professional development (CPD).</p>	<p>You will need to answer the following statement on the application form:</p> <p>Explain and evidence your ongoing commitment to, and impact of, continuing professional development (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 that outlines this and future considerations and discuss the impact of this CPD on your professional knowledge and confidence and the impact of your development within your role and for your school/trust.</p> <p>Mandatory/statutory CPD will gain a grade of "fail – requires further evidence" 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).</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 how you provide leadership within your school and system leadership within the school business profession.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a reference from your head teacher/CEO/line manager (whoever is most relevant to you in your post) • Provide two or three key pieces of evidence • The key pieces of evidence might show, for example, that you're establishing and/or taking a leadership role within local school business groups, contributing to the professional development of other school business 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 of the application form that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adhere to our Code of Ethics, published in the ISBL Professional Standards • will declare if you are working in a school/trust that has received an ESFA malpractice investigation or a qualified audit report, or a notice to improve (Ntl). This will not disqualify you but would lead to further investigation by ISBL. • have not been disqualified as a trustee or governor nor been found complicit in any proven malpractice.⁷

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 ISBL, brings the profession or ISBL into disrepute.

Requirements	How to meet the requirements
	<p>Recognition as an ISBL Fellow will be revoked, subject to appeal, in the event of a Fellow being found to be complicit in proven malpractice or disqualified as a trustee or governor, or where they are not meeting their annual CPD commitment.</p> <p>Recognition as a ISBL Fellow could be revoked in the event of a Fellow contravening the ISBL Code of Ethics (see ISBL Professional Standards).</p>

On completing your application form, ensure you review sections 4 and 5 on the form, which provide a checklist to ensure you have included all the required supporting evidence, plus email address details for submitting your application.

Please note that we no longer accept paper applications; all applications must be sent electronically.