

DST women in Science fellowships:

Making the fellowship accessible to those who need it the most.

The "Women Scientists Scheme (WOS)" has been evolved... , by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) for providing opportunities to women scientists and technologists between the age group of 30-50 years who desire to return to mainstream science and work as bench-level scientists. Through this endeavour of the Department, a concerted effort would be made to give women a strong foothold into the scientific profession, help them re-enter into the mainstream and provide a launch pad for further forays into the field of science and technology, both from the point of view of pure science and its application to societal development.

(Blurb from the DST website)

Fundamental aim: to bring the talent back in to mainstream science.

Proposed changes to WOS-A scheme:

- Remove the age limit on this fellowship.
- Make the “preference” criteria more liberal: “career break” not due to motherhood alone – temporary move to industry, being a caretaker for the elderly, or even moving to other countries to keep family together are all valid reasons.
- **The need for transparency:** Rotate the members of evaluation panel every year & make the evaluation panel & all selection criteria for that year to be made known on DST site.
- Make the reasons for acceptance or rejection known to the candidate.
- Evaluation mainly on proposed project, and on previously demonstrated ability to complete projects.
- Project need not be in collaboration with tenured faculty.
- Make fellowship open to OCIs (Overseas Citizens of India) as well.

Proposed changes to WOS-A scheme (contd.):

- Include medical insurance in the scheme.
- Include mandatory pension contribution / retirement benefits in the scheme.

Requested from this forum:

- Seek debate in this forum on the proposed actions.
- Seek communication and debate amongst women in physical Sciences & technology in India (to whom the WOS-A fellowship applies) on these proposals.
- Eventually, proposals to result in a petition which may be passed on DST (and beyond), for appropriate action.