Fellowship Review

The grade of Fellowship was suspended for new applicants* at the beginning of 2016, pending a review, following a drop in applications. It has been suggested that it is no longer relevant, given that many indexers attain an Advanced qualification by meeting the criteria for a certain level of indexing experience.

Fellowship is, however, a component of the Society's overall grading structure, which does not really work without it. Accreditation represents a training qualification, with those achieving Professional Membership still on a learning curve towards becoming competent, experienced indexers; the Advanced Professional grade recognises that an indexer has gained some experience, has business skills, can work to deadlines and can retain clients. Without Fellowship there is no higher recognition of an indexer's continuing professional development, or that good indexing skills have been retained and honed over time.

Fellowship in its recent form has required a process of self-evaluation that some have found to be extremely valuable, highlighting aspects of indexing for improvement and resulting in a higher and more informed personal standard of indexing. However, whilst no index is ever perfect, the index submitted with the application has had to be constructed with the utmost care in every detail. For those making an application, working to constant and sometimes difficult deadlines, it can be challenging to meet such standards in the commercial environment or to find the time to construct an index to the required level.

Yet the Society clearly includes highly skilled working indexers who are producing good indexes on a regular basis; these members, who may also have taken opportunities to improve their skills through active participation in workshops, conferences, local group exercises and discussions, deserve the opportunity for their expertise to be recognised beyond the basic training/experience grades.

Many professional organisations have fellowship or a similar higher qualification and these may be awarded in several different ways and with varying criteria. A working group has been set up to explore what form Fellowship should now take to meet the needs of both the Society and its members. Feedback and comments are welcomed from all members of the Society whatever their current grade. What are the incentives that would make a higher qualification attractive? What should be the criteria and what should it value in terms of indexing skills? How should it be assessed/awarded?

If you have any thoughts or views about this, please send your comments to the Fellowship Working Group: fellowship-review@indexers.org.uk

Jan Worrall
Chair, Fellowship Working Group
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**Current Fellows will retain their grading, regardless of the outcome of the working group's deliberations on Fellowship*