

[BeIPD-COFUND]

Guide for Evaluators

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Preface

This document borrows heavily from the FP7-Marie Curie-IXF scheme “Guide for Evaluators”. The rules and guidelines for the evaluation of mobile researchers are indeed internationally recognised and apply to this BeIPD-COFUND project as described in the Annex 1 of the EU/ REA contract.

1. Definitions and general information

1.1. *Request for evaluation*

The evaluators will be asked by email to agree to review the application. Together with the request, the BeIPD-COFUND project manager will send the summary of the application. Evaluators are asked to answer within 5 working days and to return the Fee Form for the payment of the fees.

1.2. *Appointment letter*

Before proceeding with evaluations, evaluators sign a Confidentiality Agreement and confirm the absence of a conflict of interest. Confidentiality rules apply at all times: before, during and after the evaluation. The evaluators receive the full application file and the information that enables them to access the online evaluation form only after having returned the signed Agreement to the project manager

1.3. *Conflict of interest*

Under the terms of the Confidentiality Agreement, evaluators must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest with respect to the candidate, the host research unit or the planned scientific work. Evaluators from research units in which the applicant has previously worked or with which se/he has published will be considered to be in “conflict of interest”.

The evaluator must immediately inform the project manager if a conflict of interest becomes apparent during the course of the evaluation. The programme manager will then take whatever action is necessary to avoid the conflict of interest situation.

1.4. *Online evaluation*

The evaluations by the evaluators are to be submitted via the online evaluation form which is made accessible to the expert-evaluators by the ULg-COFUND project manager.

The ULg helpdesk can be reached via beipd@ulg.ac.be in case of any problems.

1.5. *Useful documents*

Before proceeding with the evaluation, the evaluators should consult the following documents: description of the BeIPD-COFUND programme, the call documents and the Guide for Applicants that can be downloaded from the BeIPD-COFUND portal: <http://www.ulg.ac.be/cofund>.

2. Aims of BeIPD-COFUND

BeIPD-COFUND is a project run by the University of Liege and which is co-financed by the FP7-MSCA-People-COFUND programme. It succeeds an existing ULg programme that granted more than 120 post-doc researchers at the University of Liege (ULg) since 2005.

BeIPD allows excellent young researchers to develop their career beyond the PhD through a project of their own choice, while being integrated into the best research teams. The post-doc can thus acquire the required skills of a research leader: excellence in research, experience leading projects, management- and leadership capacities, academic independence, ...

BeIPD-COFUND offers attractive working conditions for researchers. They benefit from remuneration with social security coverage¹ and from a travel-mobility-research allowance. The researcher has complete freedom to choose his/her host research unit according to his/ her research area.

ULg wishes to speed up the implementation of the principles described in HRS4R². By aligning its practices with those of the FP7-People programme, ULg contributes to the standardisation of working conditions and the mobility of researchers across Europe and from the rest of the world to Europe, thus easing the circulation of researchers, of knowledge and of technologies.

On a yearly basis (2013-2017), BeIPD will offer 25 2-year fellowships to foreign post-docs coming to Liege (incoming post-doc programme - IPD) and 7 1-year fellowships to ULg graduates going abroad (outgoing post-doc Programme - OPD). The calls are published separately (IPD in December; OPD in April).

3. How are the applications evaluated ?

3.1. Applications

ULg BeIPD-COFUND fellowships are based on a bottom-up approach. Applicants define their own research project in cooperation with their future host unit so that they can develop a win-win cooperation in terms of science, excellence and career development. All research areas are accepted. The Guide for Applicants, the FAQ section on the BeIPD-COFUND portal and the application form describes all the mandatory items.

Each application contains a part that provides administrative information about the applicant. The scientific part contains the research project, a list of

¹ that the Belgian social law calls 'bourse de post-doctorat', not to be confused with research grants not subject to social security. The eligibility criteria for these grants are defined by law.

² www.ulg.ac.be/hr-strategy

publications, the requested budget, recommendations letters, a motivation letter and a copy of the PhD diploma.

The role of the expert-evaluators is limited to the scientific part of the application. This part must include sufficient information regarding each criterion to be evaluated. Material such as web links or any other information that the applicant is pointing to in his/ her application can also be taken into consideration.

3.2. *Eligibility*

The eligibility criteria are outlined in the call and in the Guide for Applicants. These have been checked by the project authorities prior to scientific evaluation.

Expert-evaluators should thus assume that the received application(s) is/ are eligible and need(s) to be evaluated. If nevertheless something appears to be problematic, she/he should inform the project manager, but doubts about eligibility issues should not affect his/ her scores as the evaluation criteria are completely independent from the eligibility criteria.

3.3. *Evaluation process*

Applications are assessed in a single phase process (see the Guide for Applicants for a detailed description of the evaluation process)

Each application is remotely evaluated by 4 evaluators. One of the evaluators is chosen as reporter (“rapporteur”). It is her/his responsibility to produce the consensus report that must reflect the views of all 4 evaluators and to present it to the Sector Research Council (Human and Social Sciences, Sciences and Techniques, Health Sciences). The consensus report can be modified in case the ULg Research Council decides to amend its content.

4. Evaluation procedure and reports

4.1. *Evaluation reports*

At this stage, it is your individual evaluation that we focus upon. Please form your opinion based on your own expertise: do not consult any other evaluators and do not, under any circumstances, contact the applicant.

If you are asked to evaluate more than one application, it is recommended that you evaluate all applications with the same grid before finalising your scores and comments as this will enable you to calibrate your appreciation of the different applications.

Many evaluators find it useful to highlight what they perceive as weak and strong for each criterion and then use this to form their final judgement and assign the scores.

The exact meaning of the scores 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 (excellent, very good,

good, weak, and insufficient) is described in section 4.2. The question therefore is which of these scores best describes the application. However, remember that the score only is not enough for your evaluation to be well understood and to enable the reporter to write the consensus report.

Do not be afraid to give your frank opinion and align it with an appropriate mark. Any such opinions will either be supported by others, by the reporter or, if necessary, will be the subject to discussion.

a. "Do's and Don'ts"

- Write your comments by using full and clear sentences for each criterion.
- Avoid summarising the application: the applicant and the evaluators know what the application is about.
- Avoid blow-by-blow accounts but focalise on strong and weak points based on the given criteria; everything that is included in the report must be briefly justified. You must not use general statements such as: *"The research could have been better described"*.
- Avoid generalisations such as *"Country X is weak in this area!"* If it is necessary to make a comment like this, rather, say e.g. *"It has not been demonstrated in the application that the host has the capacity to run this project"*.
- Do not assume or anticipate the quality of an institution (even prestigious): it must be clearly detailed and demonstrated in the application.
- Avoid statements such as *"the applicant has few publications for his/her age"*. Publication rates vary widely across disciplines and the age of the applicant is not a criterion. If you believe that the track record of the applicant is inadequate then, again, a phrase such as *"It has not been demonstrated in the application that the proposed fellow has a track that is record strong enough to carry out this project"* rather explains the situation. Please take the possibility into consideration that the applicant has resumed his/ her research career and assess the total time spent in research.
- The budget estimation has to reflect what the applicant expects to do in order to developing his/her research and scientific career. Do not hesitate to comment on the budget and the expenses that do not seem to be appropriate or necessary.
- Above all, avoid writing personal comments and insults;
- Check the consistency of scores and comments (see table below). Remember that a mark below 2/5 for a criterion, as well as a weighted average below 9/15, leads to the rejection of the application.
- Recommendation letters are very important and are to be considered in your evaluation. They express the point of view of

experts³ who know the applicant, her/his research project application as well as the scientific environment needed/available. It is expected that recommendations highlight the strong points of the application and the support that it will receive. A simple hosting agreement or a simple sentence expressing a "warm recommendation" is considered to be insufficient.

- Ethical issues are of considerable concern and you are recommended to assess those raised by the suggested project. Reporters are required to examine the way the ethical issues will be addressed and/ or solved. Ethical issues should not affect your evaluation but will have to be managed by the applicant and his/her supervisor.

b. Role of the Research Councils' Chairs and the Programme Manager

The Chairpersons of the ULg Research Councils are involved in the selection of evaluators and in the management process of the evaluation in order to achieve the highest possible level of quality and objectivity of the selection. They work closely with the project manager.

The call is submitted to a yearly evaluation with the support of the Quality Office of the University (SMAQ) in order to guarantee the quality of the programme.

During the evaluation, the Research Council Chairs check the quality and consistency of the feedback reports before they are sent to the applicants.

c. Role of the reporter

- The reporter is asked to carefully examine all evaluators' individual evaluation reports and prepare a draft consensus report. This consensus report is expected to be of high quality in terms of content, wording and consistency between the marks and the comments. The consensus report is a stand-alone document that should not just be a copy-paste of the individual evaluation reports comments.
- She/he moderates the discussion with the other evaluators based on the individual evaluation reports and may ask for clarifications in order to be able to write the report.
- She/he will present the report to the Sector Research Council which can suggest additional comments. A final consensus report is thus generated.
- The consensus reports are then presented to the University Research Council which establishes the final ranking and the selection of the applicants. The reporter is asked to present the report if necessary.

d. *Feedback to applicants*

- The consensus report is sent to the applicant together with the final decision on her/his application. The names of the expert-evaluators are not communicated.

4.2. *Evaluation criteria*

The evaluation criteria are:

(1) Quality of the applicant (CV, publications). The first criterion especially focuses on the applicant's qualification, career and capabilities. Overall weight: 50%.

(2) Quality of the research project and its feasibility in the proposed time frame. The intrinsic quality of the project as well as the applicants' capacity to develop and manage the research project is considered. Adequacy of the required research, mobility and travel expenses budget is taken into account as well as the ethical issues the applicant has to deal with. Consideration of ethical issues is mandatory. Overall weight: 25%.

(3) Research Environment: Compatibility of the research project with the research currently undertaken in the host unit. Quality of the host unit (availability of necessary resources, equipment and material), expected spin-offs and knowledge transfer activities. When a host unit agrees to support several applications, the adequacy of the project to the research environment has to be strictly evaluated. Overall weight: 25%.

For each criterion, a mark in the range 0 to 5 is given. The threshold for each criterion is set at 3/5. The overall threshold is an average of 3/5, taking into account the relative weights given above.

Note	Explanation
1	Insufficient. The application meets the evaluation criterion in a superficial way and information is missing.
2	Weak. The application shows many weaknesses related to the criterion in question.
3	Good. The application broadly satisfies the criterion, but raises some points for discussion here and there.
4	Very Good. The application satisfies the criterion in an appropriate way, even if some improvements remain possible.
5	Excellent. The application fully meets all the relevant aspects of the criterion in question.

5. Practical details

5.1. *Timing*

Please check the BeIPD-COFUND portal: (<http://ulg.ac.be/cofund>)

5.2. *Payments*

Non ULg expert-evaluators are awarded **200€** for each evaluated application, that was communicated via the online evaluation report and contributions to the consensus report. Payments will only be made for evaluations that are delivered on time.

In the Fee Form (see § 1.2 here above), the expert-evaluator will be asked to provide information about his/ her banking account to be used for the payment. Payments shall be made after the consensus report has been finalised.

6. BEIPD-COFUND Project Manager

Raphaëla Delahaye M.A., BeIPD-COFUND Project Manager

ULg R&D Office (ARD)
Place du XX Août, 7 (Bât. A1)
B-4000 Liège – Belgique
Tel: +32 4 366 91 04
Mail: beipd@ulg.ac.be

Annex 1 :

Selection of evaluators

At the suggestion of the BeIPD-COFUND project manager, the president of the relevant ULg Area Research Council will assign 4 evaluators who will review and evaluate an application: 2 evaluators are from ULg, and 2 are international evaluators.

“Internal evaluators”

Internal evaluators are experienced researchers chosen amongst the members of the relevant Area Research Council according to their expertise in the field of the applicant's research. One of them is chosen as reporter for the application (writes the consensus report, evaluates ethical issues, investigates if potential conflicts occur)

“International evaluators”

An international evaluator is an internationally renowned scientist in the field of the applicant's research who is working outside Belgium and will be asked to evaluate the application.

One of the international evaluators will be chosen among those listed in the application. The other will be chosen at large within scientists having a strong expertise in the specific field of the application. If relevant, international evaluators working in industry can be chosen.

Consensus reaching

It is the role of the reporter to present the evaluation of the application to the Area Research Council and to propose a consensus evaluation. In order to prepare this, evaluators will be sent all reports on the projects they have assessed and will be required to comment on strong discrepancies between their and other reports.

Selection of the applicants

The evaluation of both incoming and outgoing fellowship applicants proceeds in 4 steps:

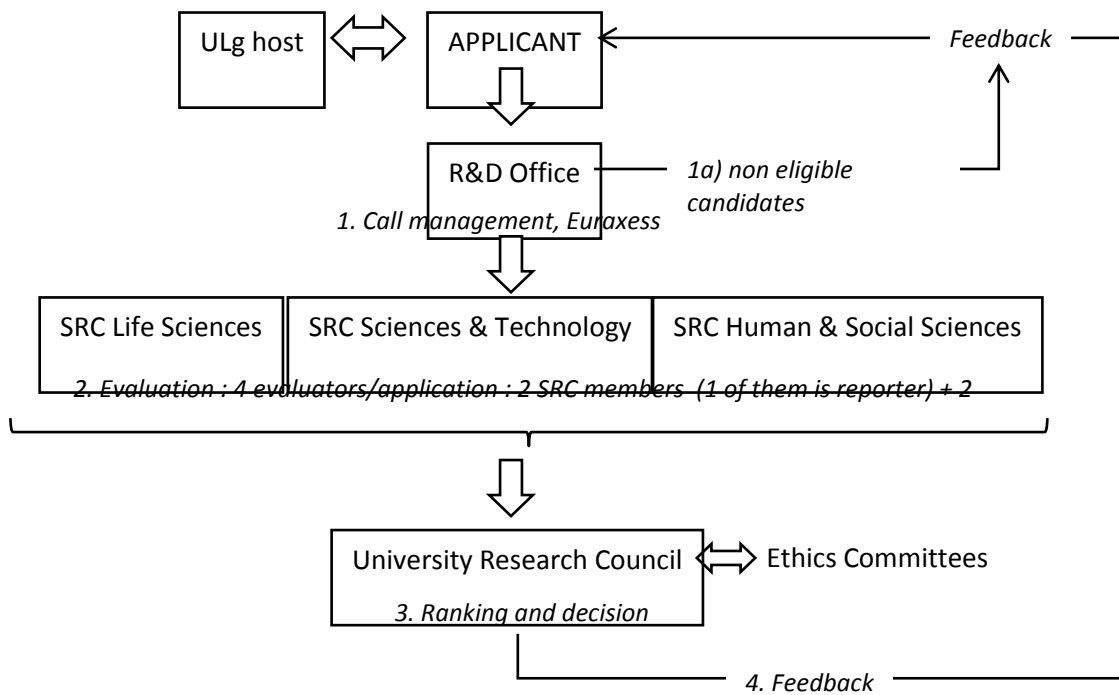
STEP 1: Call management, Euraxess Services: eligibility and application check

STEP 2: Evaluation + area ranking

STEP 3: Overall ranking and decision

STEP 4: Feedback to the applicant

Step-by-step description of the evaluation process:



STEP 1 - The R&D Office is managing the programme and the incoming and outgoing calls. Applications must be submitted in English or French to this office. After the closure of the call (1), the eligibility of applicants is checked.

Candidates whose application is not eligible will be informed about the possibility to introduce a redress request within 5 working days after reception of the written notification of the decision.

STEP 2 - Appointment of external, international and internal evaluators.

4 evaluators are selected for reviewing each application: 2 ULg internal and 2 ULg external evaluators. When feasible, not all evaluators should be of the same gender.

The Chairpersons of the Sector Research Councils (SRC) read all the applications and decide together to which Area Research Council(s) the applications will be submitted for evaluation. If the choice made by the applicant was not pertinent, the application can be redirected; this will be explained in the feedback to the applicant.

Internal and external evaluators are then suggested by the R&D Office.

The list of evaluators is then validated - or corrected - by the Chairperson of the relevant Sector Research Council – and jointly approved by the Chairpersons of the different Sector Research Councils if the project is assigned to 2 areas.

E-mails are sent to the selected referees in order to ask them to review the application. Selected referees are asked to decline if potential conflicts of interest occur.

If a referee declines, another one has to be suggested by the R&D Office and approved by the Area Research Council Chairperson(s). If the referee agrees, she/he will receive the evaluation form and will be asked to answer within 4 weeks.

The R&D Office has to collect all reports and send them to the reporter as soon as all reports have been received. The reporter is asked to mention any problem that might occur to the R&D Office.

All in- and out applications are evaluated by the Area Research Councils. Final decisions are made by the University Research Council.

Evaluation is done remotely and marks are given by the evaluators. External, international evaluators are asked to submit their evaluation and marks using the online tool. An evaluation report is written for each applicant.

The reporter will be responsible for writing this application report including comments and marks prior to the Research Council meeting. She/he will present the report to the Area Research Council (Human & Social Sciences, Sciences & Technology, and Life Sciences) or to the relevant Area Research Councils if the application involves more than one area. The Area Research council(s) can make amendments to the marks following to the members.

It then ranks the applicants and provides the list to the University Research Council.

Equality of the global score

In case of an equal global score, priority will be given to applicants from emerging economic countries, then to gender issues. In case of an equal score of – for example – two women from emerging countries, age is considered (priority to the younger candidate).

STEP 3 - The University Research Council proceeds to the final ranking in categories (A, B or C). Each applicant will receive a feedback report including the individual and consensus evaluation reports, as well as the category and their ranking within the category if it is A or B, applicants in the category C aren't ranked.

STEP 4 – Applicants as well as host research units are informed of the decision by the R&D Office (letter and feedback report). Each successful applicant must confirm his/her acceptance for the position on offer and sign an agreement with ULg within 15 working days. Each candidate is required to start his fellowship between October 1st and December 31st of the selection year.