The submission process for a F.R.S.-FNRS Grant or Fellowship
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1. The F.R.S.-FNRS

- Fund for Scientific Research
- Public foundation (90% financed by public savings)
- They support the development of fundamental scientific research in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB)
- The mission of the FNRS is to develop basic scientific research within the framework of initiatives presented by researchers at all stages of their careers
2. FNRS Grants and Fellowships

- **doctoral grants**: research fellows (aspirant) + Special Doctoral Grants, Medical Doctor Applicants, Clinical Master Specialist Applicants, Veterinary MD PhD Students (FRESH, FRIA: call in July)
- **temporary postdoctoral fellowships**: postdoctoral researchers (chargé de recherches) + Post-doctorate Clinical Masters Specialist, Ulysse Incentive Grants for Mobility in Scientific Research
- **permanent postdoctoral fellowships**: Research Associates (chercheur qualifié), then Senior Research Associates, Research Directors* + clinical researcher

*It is not necessary to have obtained a doctoral scholarship from the FNRS to be able to apply and obtain a postdoctoral fellowship. Similarly, it is not necessary to have been a temporary FNRS postdoctoral fellow to apply for a permanent postdoctoral fellowship*

* Senior Research Associate and Research Director are promotions
3. Scientific commissions

The scientific commissions have to draw up a consolidated final ranking list that will be proposed to the Board of Trustees of the FNRS. The composition of the commissions are as follows:

- **14 commissions:**
  - 4 Exact and Natural Sciences (SEN)
  - 4 Health and Life Sciences (SVS)
  - 5 Human and Social Sciences (SHS)
  - 1 FORESIGHT: Sustainable development

- **15 members per commission:**
  - 6 members from FWB universities (at least 1 ULiege member per commission)
  - 9 non-FWB members

**Choice of commission:** carefully consider the commission you select:

- Do not hesitate to consult the composition of the scientific commissions in order to strategically choose the commission and the descriptor fields.
- Applicants who select the FORESIGHT commission, which is dedicated to research projects relating to sustainable development (covering Natural Sciences, Applied Sciences, Human and Social Sciences), must demonstrate the “sustainable development” part of their research project, including interdisciplinary aspects.
4. Promoter and co-promoter

The **promoter** must meet the following conditions:

1. they must be permanently appointed to an academic or scientific position or on probationary period in the university*

2. this academic or scientific position must be effective no later than the 1st of October 2021. A promoter who will obtain the legal age of retirement / become professor emeritus by the validation deadline set by the academic authorities (rector) is not eligible

In addition, ULiège requires that the promoter cannot be retired on the start date of the exchange (01/10/2021)

If the promoter reaches the legal age of retirement / becomes professor emeritus between the beginning and the end of the granting scheme, approval by the Head of the institution must be obtained (contact P. Blanchard)

A **co-promoter** must be a member of one of the institutions listed in Appendix 1 of the Rules and regulations of each grant

* Research logisticians of rank A are not eligible as promoters of doctoral fellowships, unless they have already been promoters prior to 2021. For the postdoctoral fellowships, research logisticians (all ranks) cannot be promoters
5. Application file

Applicants must submit their application online, either in French or in English, on e-space, the management platform dedicated to calls for proposals, either in French or in English (it is recommended for applicants who wish to have their application file assessed by scientific commissions dedicated to SEN and SVS domains, as well as the Scientific Commission SHS-2, to submit their application in English - Should the application file be submitted in French, the F.R.S.-FNRS may require the applicant to provide a translation in English for the purpose of conducting the ex-ante evaluation).

File sections:

- The researcher: personal data and contact information, academic track record, prior awards and honours, publications, professional experience, etc.
- The research project: description, scientific commission choice, previous achievements...
- The work environment: intellectual and/or material resources and applicability with the project
- The referees
  - applicants for a Research Associate fellowship, as well as a Senior Research Associate, a Research Director or a Ulysse Incentive Grant for Mobility in Scientific Research fellowship: contact details of 3 referees, who will be contacted by the FNRS to give a recommendation on certain qualities of the applicant, by 19/03/2021
    if necessary, the applicant indicates up to 3 experts they does not wish to have as reviewers and provide justification (these requests are not transmitted to the scientific commissions)
  - for other grants and fellowships as well as for CQ: an recommendation letter from the promoter will be requested when validating on e-space
6. Weighting of evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Research environment</th>
<th>international potential/ recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Fellow</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Researcher</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research associate</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All these criteria are important for each of the grants and fellowships, even if the weighting coefficient is low.
Consideration of scientific seniority varies according to the scientific commissions.
Do not forget that the mission of the FNRS is to promote free fundamental scientific research in FWB.
7.1. Evaluation of the quality of the applicant

Research Fellow (60%)

Academic CV

- Grades: the academic track records must have been excellent or, at the very least, must have progressed as the course of study progressed. Rankings within the promotion are particularly valued, maybe more so than the mentions obtained (even if major distinctions and higher distinctions are real assets). An academic career that lacks breadth can be compensated for by publications or research stays abroad (Erasmus), by highlighting the contribution of this stay in terms of the creation of a scientific network. The rankings and distinctions obtained in the baccalaureate may be taken into account

- Scientific communications and/or publications: these can have an added-value, but their absence is not penalizing

- The timeline must include every year of academic study: do not leave any "blanks", explain any gaps

Promoter’s opinion

- Fundamental in the evaluation. The letter must be well written, highly complimentary and specific to the candidate. It must show that the promoter is convinced of the candidate’s capabilities. If the letter is incomplete (e.g. if the promoter does not comment on the qualities of the candidate), this is detrimental to the application
7.1. Evaluation of the quality of the applicant

Postdoctoral Researcher (40%)

Number and quality of the publications

- Very important: the CV should include a significant number of high-level papers and publications, and these publications should have a good citation rate (for fields where this is relevant)
- In addition to the quantity of publications, the quality of publications is now receiving increased attention
- Papers signed as first author (in fields where this aspect is relevant) bring a definite added value
- Detail the publication strategy (contextualize it according to the field of research, in particular)
- Clearly justify the relevance of the 5 most representative publications

Promoter’s opinion/ recommendation

- It can help to counterbalance the opinions of experts (who are involved in the individual and remote evaluation of applications)

Awards obtained

- Grades obtained in higher education are given less attention, but may be used to rank candidates who are similar

Funding obtained: indicate the doctoral grant(s) obtained

Don't forget to update your webpage (if any)

The academic courses (rankings and distinctions) are looked at, but it is less important for postdoctoral researchers than in the applications of doctoral candidates

Dec 2020
7.1. Evaluation of the quality of the applicant

Research associate (40%)

A research associate is expected to demonstrate real autonomy from the promoter, to have a record of invited lectures and to already have his or her own network. They must be able to demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research.

Number and quality of the publications
- This remains the most important point in the evaluation
- Papers signed as last author (in fields where this aspect is relevant) bring a certain added value
- Nevertheless, at this very high level of requirement, all criteria are important and none can be neglected

Opinion of worldwide, renowned referees
- Reference letters from prestigious scientists can have a decisive impact

Projects, grants, and awards obtained
- Indicate the doctoral grant(s) and postdoctoral fellowship(s) obtained

*Please note: The ULiege candidates pre-selected by the scientific commissions of the FNRS (4 applicants maximum per commission) are interviewed by an internal ULiege jury*
7.2. Evaluation of the quality of the project

feasibility, methodology, originality, potential impact*

- The project must be well written, didactic (clear, circumscribed, links between the parts well explained...) and show the candidate's enthusiasm
- It should be written for specialists AND non-specialists: have it proofread by semi-specialist colleagues
- It must ask a current question
- if the subject is common, show the originality of the way you approach it
- Define the concepts used
- In some commissions, methodology becomes a major, unavoidable criterion
- It must be carefully thought out, show the feasibility of the project. The project must be feasible during the term of the fellowship The presentation of preliminary results can be an added value
- The committees appreciate the fact that a "plan B" is provided for in case one of the 1st steps of the research does not yield any results
- The project must include a very clear hypothesis, a precise central scientific question, and then detail the obstacles to be overcome
- If the project consists of an accumulation of data, clearly justify its relevance
- The bibliography must be up to date. With few exceptions, bibliographical references cannot be limited to the French-speaking sphere. Nor should they be limited to publications in its field of research, if research on the same subject exists in other scientific fields. An interdisciplinary project can be an added value, if the environment appears to be appropriate (co-promoter, agreements made, etc.)
- Regardless of the instrument applied for and the field of research, the legal and economic aspects of a project submitted to the FORESIGHT Commission must be carefully considered and presented
- In the event of a resubmission, importance will be placed on the changes made to the file and on what the candidate has done during the past year
- Observe the instructions regarding the number of pages: maximum 4 pages maximum + 1 page of bibliography + 2 pages if charts, graphs & tables

* potential impact = the scientific impact
7.2. Evaluation of the quality of the project

Research Fellow (25%)

The promoter must be actively involved in the drafting of the research project

- Very important, this criterion has often more impact than the official weighting
- The project must be well prepared and not give the impression that it is solely the promoter's project, paying particular attention to the state of the art and the work plan
- Lack of information is detrimental: explain and justify methodology, assumptions, timeframe, model, place(s) of stay, etc.
- Carry out a risk study and show that there are alternative solutions in case of failure. Do not base everything on a particularly risky first study
- If the project is part of a larger project (Belspo...), show the complementarity between the two projects, do not copy and paste
- Collaborations with industries are not necessarily useful. On the other hand, collaborations with other universities are a valued element in projects
- In Health Sciences, the project is not necessarily part of the continuity of the master thesis
- Try to find out who will be the rapporteur of his file (within the scientific commission) and adapt if possible the project according to the readers
7.2. Evaluation of the quality of the project

Postdoctoral Researcher (40%)

- Show the coherence, the logic of the project, do not present a hermetic project, but write the project in a clear and easy to understand way
- If a research visit is planned, attach a letter of acceptance or an exchange of e-mails attesting to the steps being taken
- Justify your research stay and explain how it fits into your career plan
- Take care of the part devoted to the state of the art. Whatever the research sector, do not forget the Anglo-Saxon references
- The project must be innovative, ambitious, show a certain break with the research carried out during the thesis (particularly in Health Sciences). If the break is complete, explain why. Explain which line of research you wish to develop, among other things with regard to the research carried out previously

Research associate (25%)

- Show the innovative and particularly ambitious aspect of the research project
- Demonstrate that you are a specialist in your subject matter, while having gained experience in your discipline
- Explain which line of research will be developed, including in relation to previous research
7.3. Evaluation of the quality of the research environment

Research Fellow (15%)

- The adequacy as well as the quality of the environment are assessed
- The promoter and the quality of its research are often predominant aspects in environmental assessment
- Should be well-written with details and justifications
- Emphasise the close link between the project and the promoter
- Show that you are in line with the lab, that you are integrated, while bringing something to the table
- Having a co-promoter, especially in the case of an interdisciplinary project, is an asset, if you can prove the added value that it will bring to the project
- Please note: the application may be disadvantaged in some cases:
  - by a promoter who does not have the time to provide the necessary supervision (in particular, clinical directors)
  - when too many essential research collaborations are planned (the project becomes too risky)
7.3. Evaluation of the quality of the research environment

Postdoctoral Researcher (20%)

- Aim for a prestigious host laboratory or, at least, show that you will collaborate with laboratories whose expertise is relevant and recognised
- Show independence from the host laboratory
- If you do your postdoctoral research in the same laboratory where you did your PhD, justify this decision

Research associate (10%)

- Show what you will bring to the host laboratory and your autonomy within it
- The weight of the promoter is theoretically low, but the application will always be better evaluated if the promoter has an excellent CV and network
- The environment is not limited to the promoter or the research laboratory: the equipment available within the institution and the international network are all elements that enter into the research environment
7.4. Evaluation of the international potential / recognition

The coherence and objectives of the research stays must be made explicit

Research Fellow

- Not an official criterion
- However, having already travelled a little and/or planning a stay abroad during your PhD may be an asset
- Report any research stay abroad, even of short duration, in your file

Postdoctoral Researcher

- Not an official criterion, but a certain weight in the assessment
- The chances are significantly increased if one has already done long post-doctoral stays abroad (at least 6 months)
- At the very least, it is necessary to demonstrate its involvement in international networks
- A data collection stay may be appropriate to justify an above-average duration of doctoral studies
7.4. Evaluation of the international potential / recognition

Research associate (25%)

Long stays abroad, invitations to international conferences, active collaborations, participation in networks

- This is probably the 2\textsuperscript{nd} most important criterion for CQ candidates!
- It is necessary to show what the stays abroad have brought an added value in the candidate's career. A long-term stay should be an opportunity for the researcher to work in a radically different team and then to publish with the host team
- A long-term research stay abroad is considered to be a stay of at least six months abroad at one time. A duration of one or two years is even more valued
- The letters of recommendation from the reference persons are very important in this criterion: they must come from prestigious laboratories and be both personalised and complimentary. *Applicants shall contact the reference persons prior to mentioning their contact details in the application form if they want to make sure that their referees are willing to provide a reference letter as part of their application*
8. Publication list

The promoters who have been working for at least 2 years in institutions that have set up an institutional repository must absolutely submit their publications list in a PDF format, directly created from this repository, and choose the appropriate F.R.S.-FNRS format.

Thus, any candidate for a FNRS scholarship or mandate who has been present at ULiège for at least 2 years must generate their list of publications via ORBi, the ULiège digital library. On the ORBi site, applicants have at their disposal an online help to guide them through the application process. Training courses are and/or can also be organised.

In case of publications accepted after the validation deadline set for the applicant, applicants may add them to their application file by 1st May, as a follow-up of their application file.

Publications submitted (but not accepted) should not be included in the list of publications.

While co-authored papers are particularly valued, monographs generally remain very important for SHS and are a strong point in a SHS dossier.

While the value of open-source publications can no longer be ignored, it is nevertheless important to avoid relying entirely on this type of publication, which is not without its limitations.
9. Ethical issues

– Are you conducting experiments or using samples on human beings/materials?

– Are you using animals in your experiments?

– Does your project entail ethical issues related to Human Sciences?

In the event you are awarded a grant, researchers concerned by ethical questions will be required to submit their questionnaire accompanied by the opinion from the Ethics Committee to the FNRS

-> Anticipate these issues as soon as you write the project!
## 10. Main appendices

### All grants and fellowships:
- Publications accepted after the deadline of validation by the applicant: 01/05/2021

### Doctoral grants:
- **Academic results and ranking** (document to be completed by the Faculty/Faculties which awarded your degree(s), duplicate as necessary, then upload to the FNRS e-space): 01/05/2021
- Certificate of achievement or a copy of the Masters diploma, and if applicable (foreign diploma), a registration document or a certificate that enables admission to doctoral programmes issued by the ULiege OR certificate of registration to the final year of Master degree (Belgium students): 02/03/2021

### Postdoctoral fellowships (temporary or permanent):
- Applicants who have received their PhD before 4th February 2021: certificate or copy of the PhD diploma both signed and minutes of the thesis defence: 04/02/2021
- Applicants for a temporary fellowship who won’t have their PhD on 4th February 2021: certificate or copy of the PhD diploma and minutes of the thesis defence: 01/05/2021

### Research fellow renewal:
- Transmission to Liliane Gelon (ARD - ULiège) of the recommendation and evaluation form from the supervisor and the thesis committee (to be signed by the Rector and sent to the FNRS): 21/05/2021

Dec 2020
11. Enrolment at ULiège (PhD students)

Holders of a **foreign degree** are required to provide a registration document OR a certificate that enables the admission to doctoral programmes, issued by the ULiege in addition to a certificate of achievement or a copy of the diploma in question.

For those who have not yet done so, complete the ULiège Enrolment services form online, no later than 7 Feb 2021. The procedure can take 10 to 14 days.
12. Timeline

17 Dec 2020 call launch

21 Jan 2021 deadline for validation of applications for postdoctoral fellowships by candidates

16 Feb 2021 deadline for validation of applications for doctoral fellowships by candidates

Mar - mid-Apr 2021 individual evaluations by first-step experts
  ▶ for postdoctoral fellowships: by remote individual experts
  ▶ for doctoral grants: by scientific commission members

May 2021 consolidation performed in Scientific Commissions

Jun - Jul 2021 final decisions (Board of Trustees of the FNRS)

1st Oct 2021 Grant and Fellowships starting date
13. Additional recommendations

An application must be prepared very carefully and well in advance (including making contacts with partner teams mentioned in the research environment)

It is advisable to have a first version of the application no later than one month before the validation deadline, so that it can be re-read by the promoter and to ensure enough time to make any necessary changes

Of course, this is a considerable investment, but to botch one's file can only be a bad choice: it is almost certain that it will lead to a refusal and it will damage the reputation of the candidate and the promoter

Avoid formal mistakes (no spelling mistakes!)
14. ULiege contacts

Research and Innovation Administration
Patricia Blanchard
patricia.blanchard@uliege.be
+32 4 366 55 86

Registration office
PhD Enrolment

To enrol in a PhD OR to obtain the authorisation to enroll in a PhD, please complete the online form
admission.phd@uliege.be
15. Useful links

FNRS

e-space FNRS
(in case of technical problems: e-space@fnrs.be)

Rules & Guides of the call

Guide for applicants