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# Guide For Peer Reviewers

FCT MOBILITY PROGRAMME  
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FUNDAÇÃO PARA A CIÊNCIA E A TECNOLOGIA, IP.

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## ACRONYMS

**COI** – Conflict of Interests

**FCT** – *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.*

**CV** – *Curriculum Vitae*

## 1. ABOUT FCT

*Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.* (FCT), the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, is the Portuguese public agency under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation that supports science, technology and innovation, in all areas of knowledge.

FCT's mission is to continuously promote the advancement of knowledge in science and technology in Portugal with high international standards in quality and competitiveness and nurture its dissemination and contribution to the society and to economic growth.

FCT pursues its mission by funding - through competitive calls with peer review - doctoral scholarships, scientific employment contracts for PhD holders, research projects, Research Units, Infrastructures, Associate Laboratories<sup>1</sup>. FCT ensures Portugal's participation in international scientific organisations, fosters the participation of the scientific community in international projects and promotes knowledge transfer between Research and Development (R&D) centres and industry. Working closely with international organisations, FCT also coordinates public policy for the Information and Knowledge Society in Portugal and ensures the development of national scientific computing resources.

The results of the FCT funding instruments are the outcome of the work carried out by individual scientists, research groups and institutions that are supported by the FCT.

## 2. FCT MOBILITY PROGRAMME

The FCT Mobility programme aims to support the international mobility of researchers. The programme will fund medium and long-term stays for doctoral researchers in national or foreign institutions to carry out research and/or fieldwork activities.

The programme intends to boost the international visibility of these researchers and their career development, as well as fostering the internationalisation of the national scientific community by establishing new collaborative networks and strengthening existing networks with researchers of recognised international merit. The FCT-Mobility programme also aims to promote the transfer of knowledge and good practices between the national and international scientific community and the acquisition of specific competences in different disciplinary areas, or through intersectoral mobility. The programme contributes to the development of the entire ecosystem, supporting not only basic research, but also the interactions between industry and society.

The programme has two typologies:

- i) ***FCT Mobility outgoing*** - supports the stay of national researchers, integrated members of research centres or with a contractual relationship with an Associate Laboratory, in foreign institutions (academic or non-academic sector).

The mobility outgoing period must **last a minimum of two months and a maximum of eleven months** (consecutive months).

For researchers with children up to the age of twelve or, regardless the age, with a disability or chronic illness, if duly proven at the time of application submission, the mobility period may be interpolated, between periods of at least

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<sup>1</sup> Composed of one or more R&D Units, the Associate Laboratories are formally consulted by the Government on the national scientific and technological policy and contribute for public policies on societal challenges according to their areas of activity, among other objectives.

one consecutive month. In these cases, the period spanning the starting and ending of the mobility may not exceed twice the number of months requested in the application.

During the outgoing mobility period, the researcher may carry out his/her activities in more than one foreign institution, however, must stay for at least two consecutive months (sixty days) in one of the institutions.

- ii) **FCT Mobility incoming** - supports the stay of researchers affiliated to foreign institutions (**visiting researchers**) to carry out joint scientific activities with researchers integrated in national institutions - integrated members of research centres or with a contractual relationship with an Associate Laboratory.

The mobility incoming period must **last a minimum of one month (thirty days) and a maximum of three months** (consecutive months).

The programme is expected to fund minimum up to 185 mobilities, to be supported until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and it is opened permanently from 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 until 5pm of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2025 (mainland Portugal time zone), or until the programme's reaches the maximum allocation budget (which occurs first).

The funds under this call will be supported by investment RE-C06-i06 - 'Science Plus Capacitation' of the RRP (Recovery and Resilience Plan) and the total budget is €5,000,000 (five million euros), which corresponds entirely to funds from the RRP.

The maximum funding per each mobility support is €27,027.00 (twenty-seven thousand and twenty-seven euros).

The beneficiaries of the programme in both mobility typologies are always the national doctoral researchers (proponent applicants), that are integrated members of a Research Unit, or that have a contractual relationship with an Associated Laboratory.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

This Guide for Peer Reviewers provides the guidelines for reviewers and applicants to understand the evaluation criteria and procedures applied in the evaluation of applications submitted to the FCT Mobility Call.

No information published replaces or overrides the [Call for Applications](#) ("Aviso de Abertura", in Portuguese only) and Regulation 788/2023 of the 20th of July that rules over the special supports processes.

All reviewers will be of recognized competence in the scientific areas of the applications under evaluation and cannot be affiliated with Portuguese R&D institutions. The reviewers will support FCT throughout the whole cycle of the evaluation process, namely the preliminary hearings period, if necessary.

### 4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The applications considered eligible will be scored from one (1.0, minimum) to five (5.0, maximum) in each of the four evaluation criteria:

Criterion A – Merit of the proponent applicant (35%).

Criterion B – Merit of the Work Plan (25%).

Criterion C - Impact of the mobility plan on the development and consolidation of the applicant's career (15%).

Criterion D – Merit of the Hosting Conditions (*Outgoing – 25%*).

Criterion E - Merit of the Visiting Researcher (*Incoming – 25%*)

#### 4.1 Criterion A – Merit of the proponent applicant

Criterion A evaluates the merit of the proponent applicant, considering the submitted narrative CV, the proposed research activities and the career stage. This criterion has a relative weight of **35%** in the final score, and is evaluated according to:

- I. Contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge of relevance to the proposed work plan. This component includes publications, data sets, software, intellectual property (patents, licenses, trademarks, copyright), conference presentations, or other scientific, technological, cultural or artistic achievements;
- II. Contributions to the development of individuals and/or research teams, including training activities, supervision, mentoring or other contributions to the success of a team or progress of individuals; leadership (as principal investigator) of funded projects; management of science, technology and innovation programs or projects; involvement in collaborations/networks at national or international level;
- III. Contributions to the scientific community and society in general, including editing, peer-review and evaluation responsibilities; organization of events that benefit the research community or improved research culture; dissemination of knowledge, extension activities and other types of involvement with the public sectors, private or non-profit, as well as with society in general.

Additionally, according to Decree Law 57/2016<sup>2</sup>, and as part of the FCT's commitment to The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, as set out by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment - [CoARA](#), reviewers are advised not to use metrics as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual outputs and applicant's contributions.

#### 4.2 Criterion B – Merit of the Work Plan

Criterion B has a relative weight of **25%** in the final score, and is evaluated according to:

- I. Scientific quality, relevance and innovative nature of the plan regarding the research activities, the proposed methodology, objectives and expected results, and its potential innovative; the feasibility of the research plan, considering the proposed methodology, the period of mobility, the expected results, and the material resources available to the researcher;

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<sup>2</sup> Article 5, point 4, paragraph b, states that evaluation criteria should ["not adopt merely quantitative procedures, based on indicators, in counting publications, or in calculating their cumulative impact factors"]

- II. Need for the requested funding, given the funds currently available to the proponent applicant, and the proposed work plan.

#### 4.3 Criterion C - Impact of the mobility plan on development and consolidation of the applicant's career.

Criterion C has a relative weight of **15%** in the final score, and must consider in an integrated way:

- I. the stage of the applicant's career;
- II. the added value of this support for the development of the applicant's career in areas such as scientific production and dissemination, ability to boost future relevant research and to attract funding or other resources;
- III. the conditions made available by the hosting institution (outgoing modality) or by the visiting researcher (incoming modality) that can favourably impact the applicant's career development.

#### 4.4 Criterion D – Merit of the Hosting Conditions (Outgoing mobility)

Criterion D has a relative weight of **25%** in the final score and must consider the merit of the hosting conditions. This criterion is assessed based on the following:

- I. the host researcher CV with whom the proponent applicant will work, given their relevance in the scientific area of the application. The applicant must demonstrate the reasons for the institution(s) choice, as well as its suitability to develop the work plan.

Applications which present more than one host institution must clearly indicate the tasks to be carried out in each of the institutions and the resources available, as well as the period that the proponent will stay in each entity. If the application proposes two or more researchers responsible for hosting the applicant, the role of each one must be clearly explained, highlighting the relevance of the participation of each one and the complementarity of their skills for the success and feasibility of the mobility plan and respective tasks.

#### 4.5 Criterion E - Merit of the Visiting Researcher (Incoming mobility)

Criterion E has a relative weight of **25%** in the final score, and the scientific merit of the visiting researcher is evaluated regarding the analysis of the CV and description of the work plan to be developed in mobility which should highlight its contribution to the national research and innovation ecosystem, more precisely considering the proponent's perspective regarding the impact of the visiting researcher for the mobility plan. The applicant must clearly demonstrate the reasons for this choice, as well as its adequacy to the work plan.

## 5. Selection and Decision Method

### 5.1 Scoring System

The scoring system uses a **5 point scale, using 0.1 increments**. The maximum score is 5 and the minimum is 1, as presented in Table I. Each criterion should be scored accordingly, and the final classification is presented with two decimal places.

**Table I – Qualitative descriptors associated to the 5-point scale.**

Evaluation	Score	Strengths & Weaknesses
<b>Excellent</b>	5	Exceptionally strong with no weaknesses
<b>Very good</b>	4	Very strong with some negligible weaknesses
<b>Good</b>	3	Some strengths with several minor weaknesses
<b>Weak</b>	2	Few strengths and major weaknesses
<b>Poor</b>	1	Very few strengths and serious weaknesses

The final classification (FC) of the mobility proposal is obtained through the following formula:

$$FC = 0.35 A + 0.25 B + 0.15C + 0.25 (D \text{ or } E)$$

Only mobility proposals with a final score **equal to or greater than 2.5** are considered eligible for funding.

**In case of a tie**, the tiebreaker criteria are as follows: Criterion C classification, followed by Criterion B classification and finally the classification obtained in Criterion A.

### 5.2 Evaluation Process

The evaluation of submitted applications will include at least one evaluation moment every three months. The provisional results of the call will be announced up to one month after the respective evaluation moments.

Three Colleges of International Reviewers will be set up to evaluate the applications: A) College of Life and Health Sciences, B) College of Exact Sciences and Engineering, and C) College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Applicants are responsible for choosing the College of Reviewers, where they want to be evaluated. In addition, indicate the most suitable scientific area related to their work plan. The scientific areas are listed in Appendix I and are adapted from the OECD's revised Field of Science and Technology Classification – FOS.

Each College of Reviewers will have a Chairperson responsible for:

- 1) Assisting FCT with the constitution of the International College suggesting possible reviewers and external reviewers (if necessary);
- 2) Assigning the applications to the College of Reviewers;
- 3) Keeping the evaluation process within the defined time frame;
- 4) Supporting the FCT team in solving potential Conflicts of Interest identified;
- 5) Preparing and assuring the quality of the final reports to be conveyed to the applicants;
- 6) Revising the reviewers' responses to the submitted preliminary hearings from the applicants.

The Chairs may evaluate applications whenever necessary and appropriate.

#### 5.2.1 Applications Eligibility and assignment

Before every moment of evaluation all the submitted proposals will be checked for being according to the eligibility criteria. This task will be performed by FCT. All the proposals that do not comply to the eligibility criteria will be excluded from the evaluation process. The proponent applicants will be informed of the exclusion, having the possibility to submit another application for a following evaluation period within the timeframe of the call.

The eligible applications will then be assigned, by the Chair, to the reviewers taking into consideration any declared Conflicts of Interest (COI), and the matching of the reviewers' expertise with the application scientific area. The Chair may suggest an external reviewer(s), in case the required scientific expertise for a given proposal is not covered by the College.

#### 5.2.2 The review process

Each application is evaluated by one or two reviewers who are not in a conflict of interest (COI) situation with the proponent applicant, the host researcher (outgoing mobility), the visiting researcher (incoming mobility) or host institution(s) – national or foreign institutions. If any reviewer identifies an additional COI situation in relation to any application(s) assigned to him/her, he/she must immediately and formally declare it to FCT and to the Chair, who is responsible for the reallocation of the application(s) to another member of the College.

Each reviewer must fill in an evaluation report for each of the applications assigned to him/her, as follows:

- scoring each of the four evaluation criteria;
- preparing an overall comment, to clearly justify the final classification awarded. The overall comment should:
  - a) refer the evaluation attributed to each criterion;
  - b) include a comment on the proposed budget, if applicable (suggested changes in the budget must be justified);

The Chair of the College, in articulation with FCT if necessary, will analyse the final classification of each application considering the scores awarded by the College members and in case of an asymmetric classification (more than 1.5 difference) a consensus must be reached between the two college members.

The Chair will collect all evaluation reports and is responsible to prepare the final reports to be conveyed to the applicants in close articulation with the College members and the FCT.

For mobilities with a duration period less or equal to 5 months the applications may be evaluated by one College member without compromising the quality of the assessment.

### 5.3 Feedback to Applicants

The quality of the comments to be transmitted to the applicants is of paramount importance. All College members and Chairs should comply with the following additional guidelines in the elaboration of the final report, which will be communicated to the applicant.

#### Comments must:

- Be coherent with the scores considering the descriptors presented in Table I (section 5);
- Be clear and consistent, referring the evaluation attributed for each criterion;
- Use dispassionate and analytical language, avoiding dismissive statements about the applicant, the proposed science, or the scientific field;
- Be impeccably polite;
- Address the submitted work plan and not the work the reviewers consider having been proposed.

#### Comments must not:

- Include metrics in the reports, as also applicants are discouraged to use Journal or publication metrics, such as impact factors and research performance metrics, in their narrative CV;
- Give a description or a summary of the application;
- Ask questions, as the applicant will not be able to answer them;

- Provide recommendations or advice for improving the application;
- Have contradicting statements;

## 6. Confidentiality and conflict of Interest (Col)

### 6.1 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the applications must be protected, and the reviewers are bound by confidentiality obligations regarding the applications and all stages of the evaluation process. All reviewers involved in the evaluation are asked not to copy, quote, or otherwise use material from the applications. All reviewers are also requested to agree with a statement of confidentiality relative to the contents of the applications, the evaluation process and the evaluation results.

### 6.2 Conflicts of Interest

Researchers involved in the Call cannot participate in the evaluation process. Those with first-degree relationships, domestic partnership or married with a proponent applicant, host researcher or visiting researcher are also hindered to be involved. Prior to the evaluation process, all reviewers are required to declare Conflicts of Interest (Col), based on the name of the applicant, host researcher, visiting researcher and Host Institutions – national and foreign institutions. Additionally, Col can be declared at any moment of the process when not identified prior to the evaluation. Any Col identified during the evaluation process must be immediately communicated to the Chair and the FCT, and the application will be reassigned by the Chair to a different reviewer.

#### 6.2.1 Disqualifying Conflict of Interest

Reviewers cannot evaluate nor participate in evaluation process of an application in the following circumstances:

- Personal or financial interest in the application's success;
- Current or planned close scientific cooperation with the proponent applicant or either with the host or the visiting researcher;
- Research cooperation (*e.g.*, joint publications) within the last 3 years before the opening date of the Call, with the proponent applicant or either with the host or the visiting researcher;
- Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship with the proponent applicant or either with the host or visiting researcher (*e.g.*, teacher-student relationship up to and including the post-doctoral phase), within the last 3 years before the opening date of the Call;
- Affiliation, or pending transfer, to any Department, Institution(s) or Research Centre involved in the application;
- Be an active member in a Council or similar Supervisory Board of the Department, Institution or Research Centre to which the proponent applicant has been affiliated to within the last 3 years or will be connected to in the scope of the application.

### 6.2.2 Potential Conflict of Interest

In the case of a potential CoI, the reviewer must notify FCT, which will analyse and decide if the reviewer is able to perform an unbiased evaluation, removing the declared CoI, or if the conflict should rather be maintained and the reviewer excluded from the assessment of the application. A potential CoI exists in the following circumstances:

- Relationships other than first-degree, marriage or domestic partnership; other personal ties or conflicts;
- Professional relationships, other than those listed in section 6.1;
- Participation in university bodies other than those listed in section 6.1, *e.g.* in scientific advisory committees in the research environment;
- Involvement in a Project with a closely related research topic (competition issues);
- Participating in an on-going scientific or inter-personal conflict with the applicant(s);
- Any other circumstances the reviewer feels that may not be impartial.

## **APPENDIX I – MAIN AREAS AND SCIENTIFIC AREAS**

This Appendix lists the main areas and scientific areas, adapted from the [OECD's revised Field of Science and Technology Classification - FOS](#).

### **A) Evaluated by the College of Life and Health Sciences**

#### Main Area: Medical and Health Sciences

##### Scientific Areas

- Basic Medicine
- Clinical Medicine
- Health Sciences
- Medical Biotechnology

#### Main Area: Natural and Agricultural Sciences

##### Scientific Areas

- Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Animal and Dairy Science
- Veterinary Science
- Agricultural Biotechnology

## **B) Evaluated by the College of Exact Sciences and Engineering**

### Main Area: Exact Sciences and Engineering and Technology

#### Scientific Areas

- Mathematics
- Computer and Information Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Chemical Sciences
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Information Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Materials Engineering
- Medical Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Environmental Biotechnology
- Industrial Biotechnology
- Nanotechnology

## **C) Evaluated by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

### Main Area: Social Sciences and Humanities

#### Scientific Areas

- Psychology
- Economics and Business
- Educational Sciences
- Sociology
- Law
- Political Sciences
- Social and Economic Geography
- Media and Communications
- History and Archaeology
- Languages and Literature
- Philosophy, Ethics and Religion

- Arts