

[P-SPHERE(COFUND)]

# Guide for Evaluators

July 2017

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## List of definitions

**Supervisory Board (SB):** Board constituted by two representatives of UAB and one of each Institution. This board will work to ensure the proper development of the programme with periodical meetings.

**Selection Scientific committee (SCC):** The Selection Scientific Committee are constituted by three independent evaluators by research domain.

**Panel Chair (PC):** The Panel Chair will be the evaluator responsible for ensuring the good functioning of the evaluation, for detecting any potential conflict of interest and for supporting experts to conscientiously apply the call evaluation criteria.

**Management Team (MT):** The management team will be responsible of implementing the programme.

**Mobility Rule:** Mobility requirement of the Marie S. Curie programme: applicants must not have resided, or conducted their principal activity, in Spain for over 12 months in the 3 years prior to the closing date of the call.

**Project Manager (PM):** Person responsible to day-to-day follow up the programme.

**Experienced Researchers:** Researchers having at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) since gaining a university diploma giving them access to doctoral studies, in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained or researchers already in possession of a doctoral degree, regardless of the time taken to acquire it.

## **1. Introduction**

The guide describes the general principles and procedures that will be used in the evaluation and selection of proposals of the P-Sphere call. You may use the guide and the evaluation criteria as a checklist to ensure the quality of your proposal.

Before reading this guide, evaluators should consult the scope of the P-Sphere project and complimentary information available on the web page at: <http://www.uab.cat/psphere/> as well as the terms and conditions document.

## **2. Aims of P-Sphere-COFUND**

P-Sphere-COFUND is a project run by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and co-financed by the EU as part of the Horizon 2020-COFUND programme (Grant Agreement 665919).

The P-Sphere project is a long-term programme (lasting 5 years) in which two calls shall be opened to attract experienced researchers, with the same transnational mobility requirements as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie calls. It is aimed at interdisciplinary research related to the strategic challenges of Horizon 2020 and to the inter-sectoral mobility of researchers, with stays at other institutions, academic, industrial and technological centres.

The project, shall offer 2-3 year fellowships to a total of 48 fellows who shall have the opportunity to further their research careers in an environment of excellence. The P-Sphere programme is centred around five multidisciplinary domains, including transversal technologies: Food, Health, Smart and Sustainable Cities, Cultural Heritage and Materials & Energy.

The UAB-CEI wishes to speed up the implementation of the principles described in Chapter & Code emphasizing those related to evaluation, selection and processes.

## **3. Evaluation principles**

The processes for evaluating and selecting proposals are based on a number of well-established principles:

- (i) **Quality.** Projects selected for funding must demonstrate high technical and managerial quality in the context of the objectives of the P-Sphere call.
- (ii) **Transparency.** In order to provide a clear framework for the preparation of proposals for funding, and for the evaluation of proposals, the process for applying for funding must be clearly described and available to any interested party. In addition, adequate feedback must be provided to proposers on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.
- (iii) **Equality of treatment.** A fundamental principle is that all proposals should be treated alike, irrespective of where they originate from or the identity of the applicants.
- (iv) **Impartiality.** All proposals are treated impartially on their merits.
- (v) **Efficiency and speed.** The procedures have been designed to be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, making appropriate use of public funds and respecting the legal framework within which the work programme is managed.

During all the evaluation process the P-Sphere Management Team (MT) will ensure that the evaluation process is fair and in line with the requirements and with the principals of the European Code and Conduct for the Requirements of Researchers.

To guarantee transparency and equality, proposals shall be evaluated by three independent evaluators (after an eligibility check).

#### **4. Role of the evaluators**

The evaluators conduct the evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave throughout in a professional manner. These individuals must have a high level of professional experience in the public or private sector in one or more of the areas being evaluated. Evaluators must also have the appropriate language skills required for the proposals to be evaluated.

#### **5. Appointment of evaluators**

To evaluate the proposals submitted in response to the call, the P-Sphere management team (MT), together with the representatives of the participating institutions, draws up a list of appropriate independent evaluators to chair the different panels and constitute the Scientific Selection Committee (SSC). Panel chairs (one per sector) shall be external and renowned research leaders with a high level of expertise in the training of researchers.

The SSC shall be constituted by three independent evaluators by research domain in consideration of the following criteria, which are identical to those of the Charter & Code (and according to their availability):

- Diverse expertise and competencies;
- a reasonable gender balance (at least 25% of female);
- a reasonable number of international evaluators (at least 25%);
- a reasonable number of external evaluators (at least 50%);
- adequately trained evaluators

Therefore every SSC will have the following type of evaluators:

##### Internal evaluators

Internal evaluators are experienced UAB-CEI researchers chosen for their expertise on different scientific fields.

##### International evaluator

An international evaluator is an internationally renowned scientist on field who is working outside of Spain and shall be asked to participate in the P-Sphere evaluation.

##### External evaluator

An external evaluator is a renowned scientist on the field who is working outside of the UAB-CEI and shall be asked to participate in the P-Sphere evaluation.

One of these is chosen as the Panel chair (PC). The main tasks of the PC are to ensure: evaluate that the process is conducted correctly, draft the consensus report and assesses whether potential conflicts occur.

The names of the independent evaluators assigned to individual proposals are not made public.

## **6. Conflict of interest**

When appointing an independent evaluator, the MT must take all reasonable steps to ensure that he/she is not faced with a conflict of interest in relation to the proposals on which he/she is required to give an opinion. To this end, the MT requires evaluators to sign an exclusion criteria form and a statement that no such conflict of interest exists at the time of their appointment and that they undertake to inform the MT if one should arise in the course of their duties. When so informed, the MT takes all necessary actions to remove the conflict of interest.

## **7. Confidentiality**

The MT is required to ensure the confidentiality of the evaluation process. To this end, they are sent a code of conduct for independent evaluators together with the letter of appointment before the evaluation of the proposals. The evaluators must respect the confidentiality of the information contained in the proposals that they evaluate and of the evaluation process and its outcomes and to act with strict impartiality.

## **8. Definitions and general information**

### *8.1 Request for evaluation*

The evaluators shall be asked by email to agree to review the proposals. Together with the request, the P-Sphere MT shall send a summary of the proposals to evaluate. Evaluators are asked to respond within 5 working days and to return the letter of appointment and statement of confidentiality and confirm the absence of any conflict of interest.

### *8.2 Letter of appointment*

Before proceeding with evaluations, evaluators sign a letter of appointment and statement of confidentiality and confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. Confidentiality rules apply at all times, before, during and after the evaluation. Only after having returned the signed letter of appointment together with the statement of confidentiality and conflict of interest to the project manager, shall the evaluators receive all documents and the information needed to access the evaluation.

### *8.3 Conflict of interest*

Under the terms of the letter of appointment, evaluators must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest with respect to the applicant or the planned scientific work.

The evaluator must immediately inform the Project Manager (PM) if a conflict of interest becomes apparent during the course of the evaluation. The PM shall then take whatever course of action is necessary to avoid the conflict of interest.

#### *8.4 Useful documents*

Before proceeding with the evaluation, the evaluators should consult the following documents: description of the P-Sphere-COFUND Programme and guide for applicants. All these documents can be downloaded from the call page.

### **9. How the application is evaluated**

#### *9.1 Applications*

P-Sphere–COFUND fellowships are based on a bottom-up approach. Applicants define their own research project in cooperation with their host unit, so that they can develop a win-win cooperation in terms of science, excellence and career development. The open research areas are published on the P-Sphere web site. The guide for applicants, the FAQ section on the website and the application form describe all of the items that are mandatory for the application.

Each application has an administrative part that contains information about the applicant. The scientific part contains the curriculum vitae (including up to two recommendation letters), the research project, the research context and the recommendation letter.

The role of the evaluators is limited to the scientific part of the application. This part must include sufficient information regarding each criterion to be evaluated.

#### *9.2 Eligibility*

The eligibility criteria are outlined in the call and in the guide for applicants. These have been checked by the PM prior to scientific evaluation.

Evaluators should thus assume that all the applications are eligible and need to be evaluated. However, if something appears to be problematic, he/she should consult with the PM, but doubts regarding eligibility should not affect his/her grades, as evaluation criteria are completely independent from eligibility criteria.

#### *9.3 Evaluation process*

The evaluation of fellowship applicants proceeds in two steps:

- **Eligibility check:** the MT shall be responsible for this check. For any doubts or queries, please contact: [pr.sphere@uab.cat](mailto:pr.sphere@uab.cat).
- **Scientific evaluation**

Each application is evaluated by 3 evaluators who fill in individual assessment forms giving grades and providing comments. Once all of the evaluators have completed their individual assessments and send them to PM, a consensus meeting will be held to discuss the grades awarded and to arrive at a consensus, which is documented in a consensus report.



### Consensus grades

The evaluators attempt to agree on a consensus grade for each of the blocks of criteria. They justify their grades with comments suitable for feedback to the applicants and agree on an overall consensus report.

In order to facilitate the discussion among the evaluators, the PC shall act as a “rapporteur” for the proposal. The proposal rapporteur is responsible for amalgamating the individual evaluators' views, for initiating the discussion and drafting the consensus report.

If during the consensus discussion it is found to be impossible to bring all the evaluators to a common point of view on any particular aspect of the proposal, up to two additional referees may be invited to review the proposal.

### Outcome of consensus

The outcome of the consensus discussion is the consensus report signed by the participating independent evaluators. The independent evaluators are responsible for ensuring that the consensus report faithfully reflects the individual assessments and consensus reached. Should it be impossible to reach a consensus, the report sets out the majority view of the independent evaluators but also records any dissenting views from any particular evaluator(s).

The independent evaluators submit the consensus report to The P-Sphere MT.

## **10. Reports**

### *10.1 Evaluation Reports*

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

If you are asked to evaluate more than one application, you are advised to evaluate all applications finalising your grades and comments as this will enable you to see the full spectrum of applications allocated to you.

Many evaluators find it useful to make comments highlighting what they perceive as weak and strong points for each criterion and then use this to form their judgement and assign the grade.

The exact meaning of the grades 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 (excellent, very good, good, insufficient, weak) is described in Section 10.4. The question therefore is which of these grades best describes the application. Note however that the grade alone is not enough for your evaluation to be well understood and you must also write the consensus report.

Do not be afraid to give your frank opinion and support it with an appropriate grade. Any such opinions shall either be supported by others, by the “rapporteur” and shall be the subject of discussion if necessary.

#### *“Do's and Don'ts”*

- Do write your comments using full and clear sentences for each criterion.

- Do avoid summarising the application. The applicant and the evaluators know what the application is about.
- Do avoid blow-by-blow accounts but do focalise on strong and weak points based on the given criteria; everything that is included in the report must be briefly justified. Do not use general statements such as: *"The research could have been described better"*.
- Do avoid generalisations such as *"Country X is weak in this area!"* If you need to make such a comment, it is better to say, for instance, that *"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 group (even a prestigious one): it must be clearly detailed and demonstrated in the application.
- Do avoid statements such as *"the candidate has few publications for his/her age"*. Publication rates vary widely across disciplines and age is not a criterion. If you believe the track record of any participant to be inadequate then, again, include a comment such as *"It has not been demonstrated in the application that the proposed fellow has a strong enough track record to carry out this project"*. Please consider the possibility that the applicant has resumed a research career and assess the total time spent on research.
- Above all, do avoid writing personal comments and insults;
- Do check the consistency of grades and comments (see tables section 10.4). Remember that a grade below 4/5 for a criterion (1) and (2), as well as a grade below 3/5 for a criterion (3), leads to the rejection of the application.
- Do only consider the material included in the application.
- Ethical issues are of considerable concern and you should make a note of those raised by the proposed project. Ethical issues should not affect your evaluation but will need to be managed by the applicant and his/her supervisor.

### *10.2 Role of the Panel Chair and the Management Team*

The PC is asked to carefully examine all 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 grades and comments. The consensus report is a new document and not a simple copy-paste of the comments in the Individual Evaluation Reports.

He/she moderates the discussion with the other evaluators based on all of the Individual Evaluation Reports and may ask for clarifications in order to be able to draft the report.

The consensus reports are then presented to the MT, which produce the final ranking and selection of the applicants.

During the evaluation, the MT help to assess the quality and consistency of the reports before sending them as feedback to the applicants.

### 10.3 Feedback to applicants

The consensus report is sent to the applicant together with the final decision on his/her application. This will help candidates in the future applications. The names of the evaluators are not given.

### 10.4 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria are:

(1) Quality of the applicant (CV, publications). The first criterion especially focuses on the applicant's qualifications, career background and capabilities, recommendation letters. Overall weight: 40%.

(2) Research project. 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 its impact on society. Overall weight: 50%.

(3) Research Context: Compatibility of the research project with the research currently undertaken in the host unit. Quality of the host unit (availability of required resources, equipment and material). Overall weight: 10%.

For each criterion, a grade in the range 0 to 5 is given. The threshold for each criterion is 4, 4, 3.

Note	Explanation
0	Weak. The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
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.
4	Very Good. The application satisfies the criterion in an appropriate manner, even though some improvements are still possible.
5	Excellent. The application fully meets all of the relevant aspects of the criterion in question.

The following table summarises the evaluation criteria:

Applicant (40/100) Threshold (4)	Research proposal (50/100) Threshold (4)	Research Context (10/100) Threshold (3)	Ethical issues (review)
Priority in case of ex aequo			
2	1	3	-
Research Experience: Skills and Production	Quality of the proposal (innovative, original, interdisciplinary aspects, etc.)	Integration in the research domain	Sensitive proposals will undergo an ethical review
Mobility experience	Appropriate work plan and feasibility of the project (timeline, methodology, etc.)	Potential collaboration for	
Recommendation Letters	Impact & Relevance	Infrastructures, equipment	

The proposal will not be evaluated on ethics issues; however during the process **proposals that might raise ethical issues will be flagged**. All proposals selected for funding will be subjected to an ethics assessment (by a member of the UAB's *Human & Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee*).

## 11. Practical details

### Timeline

#### 2nd Call

Call open: September 6<sup>th</sup> (2017)

Call deadline: October 6<sup>th</sup> (2017)

Candidates will receive an automated confirmation when submitting the application via the P-SPHERE website.

#### One week after call deadline

Applicants will be informed by email about their eligibility. This information will also be published on the front page of the call's website. Applicants whose application has been rejected will receive an email stating the reason for rejection. Applicants whose application is accepted will receive an email outlining the selection process and criteria.

#### 1.5 months after call deadline

Applicants will receive a copy of the review report. Successful applicants will receive an offer of hire

#### Deadline for incorporation

1<sup>st</sup> March 2018

## **12. P-Sphere-COFUND Contact**

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