



2016 Annual Work Plan EUROfusion Researcher Grants

Guide for applicants

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1. Introduction

The EUROfusion Researcher Grant action is set-up through calls for participation to the EUROfusion Consortium Members. The evaluation of submitted proposals is performed through a set of procedures in order to ensure transparency and excellence in the selected projects. This guide details the procedures to be followed for these actions.

2. Eligibility to the programme

The following eligibility criteria apply.

- 1) This action supports the initial training of researchers, typically during the first years of their careers in research. More precisely, this action is directed towards researchers of all nationalities, namely:
 - Researchers in possession of a doctoral degree (PhD) who have completed their PhD and defended their thesis in the two years preceding the deadline for proposal submission of the present call;
 - Engineers/technicians in possession of a master degree in Engineering (or any equivalent university degree in Engineering) with a professional experience of at least 3 years up to 5 years after the master degree.

The candidate must be employed by a EUROfusion Member or its Third Party. In case the researcher/engineer/technician has not started her/his contract at the time of the application for the grant, the Consortium member will have to provide a declaration of intent to recruit the researcher/engineer under an employment contract or equivalent contract compatible with the national legislation. She/he must be recruited by 30 June 2016.

- 2) The candidate's research project must be on a scientific or technical topic relevant to the objectives of the Work Plan for the implementation of the Fusion Roadmap in 2014-2018.
- 3) The implementation of this action will be through the *EUROfusion Consortium* for the implementation of the Fusion Roadmap. The applicant must therefore have a contract with either a EUROfusion Member or one of its Third Parties. The post-doctoral contract (or equivalent) can be shared between two EUROfusion Members or their Third Parties, allowing the post-doctoral work to be conducted successively in two complementary laboratories.
- 4) The application must be supported and sent by the relevant GA member(s).

3. Evaluation criteria and procedures

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the EUROfusion Programme Manager with the assistance of independent experts.

3.1. Experts selection

The EUROfusion Programme Manager will nominate expert evaluators.

Experts perform 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. They sign an appointment letter, including a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration. Confidentiality rules must be adhered to at all times, before, during and after the evaluation.

Conflicts of interest: Under the terms of the appointment letter, experts must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest, and must immediately inform EUROfusion if one becomes apparent during the course of the evaluation. EUROfusion will take whatever action is necessary to remove any conflict.

Confidentiality: The appointment letter also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his own account, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

At the beginning of the evaluation, the experts will be briefed by EUROfusion on the evaluation procedure, the experts' responsibilities, the issues involved in the particular area/objective and any other relevant item.

3.2. Selection criteria of the proposal

On receipt by EUROfusion, proposals will be assessed against the selection criteria specified herein. Proposals which do not fulfil these criteria will not be included in the evaluation.

A proposal will be selected only if it meets all of the following conditions:

- It is received by EUROfusion before the deadline given in the call;
- It is compliant with the criteria defined under section 2;
- It is complete and includes all documentation required in section 4.

3.3. The evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure will be carried out in three stages:

- evaluation of the proposal content by the experts in view of the establishment of a short list (the number of short listed candidates should be up to about twice the number of foreseen grants);
- interviews of all short-listed candidates;

- consensus meeting to define the final ranking of the proposals.

3.3.1. Scoring

Each candidate will be evaluated against the pre-determined evaluation criteria given in Annex 1 and scored according to the thresholds and weightings also given in Annex 1.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Half marks can be given. The scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

- 1 - *Poor.*
- 2 - *Fair.*
- 3 - *Good.*
- 4 - *Very Good.*
- 5 - *Excellent.*

3.3.2. Short Listing.

The evaluation of the candidates by the experts in view of the establishment of a short list will be carried out in three steps:

In the first step the experts are acting individually; they do not discuss the proposals with each other, nor with any third party. The experts record their individual opinion in an Individual Assessment Report (IAR), giving scores and also comments against the evaluation criteria. Each proposal will be assessed in detail by two experts.

In the second step, all experts will hold a consensus meeting under the chairmanship of the EUROfusion Programme Manager or his representative to discuss the complete set of proposals. The experts having assessed a same proposal will discuss to reach a consensus on the scoring. All criteria where a significant difference appears (more than 1 point) will be addressed. When, after the discussion, differences in scoring subsist, the average marks will be used for this (these) criterion (criteria). The outcome of this meeting is a summary table showing the scores of all candidates agreed between the experts.

In case it is impossible to reach an agreement between the expert evaluators, EUROfusion will designate a new expert evaluator to act as arbitrator.

EUROfusion will take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the IARs, with particular attention given to clarity, consistency, and appropriate level of detail. If important changes are necessary, the reports will be referred back to the experts concerned.

Based on the definitive marks which are agreed between the experts at the end of this consensus meeting, a short list will be established by EUROfusion. The short list will include not more than twice the number of foreseen grants.

3.3.3. Interviews with the short listed candidates

The evaluation will then progress toward individual interviews of the short listed candidates.

The interview board will be constituted of all the experts involved in the evaluation process and of the EUROfusion Programme Manager (or his representative). The board is chaired by the EUROfusion Programme Manager or his representative. The secretariat of the board is provided by EUROfusion..

At the interview it can happen that new facts emerge about the details of the Research Programme. Since the interview is the first opportunity for the whole Panel to review the Research Programme in detail, it is possible that afterwards the Panel can revise the mark given to the Research Programme during the first step.

EUROfusion shall ensure fair and equal treatment of the candidates in the interview and in the following Consensus meeting. Presentation in English shall be requested.

The interview process and criteria are detailed under Annex II.

3.3.4. Consensus meeting, final scores and ranking

After the interview, the board will hold a final meeting in order to:

- (1) Agree on the final score attributed to each short listed candidate (the final score is constituted of the sum of the two marks attributed at the end of the first stage assessment (consensus meeting) and during the interview, with a weight of respectively 40% and 60%)
- (2) Produce a final ranking of candidates and a proposal for the attribution of the grants.

In the case of proposals with the same final score, the board will decide the priority order based on the mobility plan foreseen in the project or at the end of the two years grant (if any). Preference will be given to the research projects including visits or long stay in other laboratories during the two years of the Grant programme or at the end of it.

At the end of the interview the board will proceed with a debriefing and attribute an interview mark to each candidate.

4. Proposal content

The proposal will contain the following information:

- A letter from the relevant GA member(s) addressing the application to EUROfusion and certifying that the post-doctoral (or equivalent level) contract with the EUROfusion Consortium Member or its Third Party, has started or declaration of intent to recruit the researcher/engineer under an employment contract or equivalent contract compatible with the national legislation;
- The CV of the candidate with all relevant information (specifically the European and international experience);
- A copy of the PhD thesis of the candidate (or the Master thesis in case the candidate fulfils requirements of paragraph 2.2). If not available in English, a summary of the thesis in English is to be provided;
- A copy of the report of the PhD jury, when available. If such a report is not available then a letter of the academic supervisor should be included;
- A list of several referees (with their e-mail addresses), including at least one who did not work with the candidate but may know him/her well enough;
- The list of scientific publications of the candidate. In case the PhD thesis is not in English, those scientific publications that are written in English should be included;
- The work programme (research project) of the candidate including:
 - A description, by the candidate, of his/her research project and its objectives (maximum length: 2 pages; minimum font size 11 point). This report shall explain the importance of the project for fusion research and for the candidate's training/development.
 - A coherent description of the foreseen work indicating the foreseen breakdown including the participation in training actions, research actions involving specific expenditure, long term missions in other laboratories, key meetings and conference attendance and showing how these contribute to the achievement of the scientific goals of the work programme (maximum length: 2 pages).
 - A list of milestones to be reached.
 - A list of deliverables to be produced.
- A financial summary for expenses proposed by the EUROfusion Member or its Third Party, including the following information per year and researcher:
 - Salary cost (including fees, superannuation and social charges).
 - A global forecast of training expenses related to the successful execution of the research project, if any (e.g. purchase of hardware, consumables, participation in conferences and training courses, fees for scientific journals, memberships in scientific associations etc.).
 - Missions costs with a summary of the foreseen stays in other laboratories indicating the purpose and duration of the stays.
- The following complementary documentation will be submitted:
 - Experience of the EUROfusion Consortium Member or its Third Party in the topic of the research/post-doctoral project (maximum length: 1 page).

- Organisation by the EUROfusion Consortium Member or its Third Party of the mentoring (maximum length: 1 page).
- Short CV of the mentor and main relevant publications (maximum length: 3 pages)

5. Recommendations for applicants

The following recommendations are given to candidates to optimize their proposal and presentation:

- The candidate and mentor should have a close interaction during the preparation of the Work Programme. A good briefing of the candidate by the mentor is strongly advised, especially if the candidate is from outside the Fusion field.
- The candidate is strongly advised to have a rehearsal of his presentation at his institute and/or at the institute supporting his proposal. If needed this can be done via Videoconference to avoid unnecessary travelling. Some of the (future) colleagues can act as 'shadow expert panel' to train the candidate for possible questions he might expect in the actual interview.
- Candidates that are involving different institutes in their Work Programmes should contact responsible people at these institutes to ascertain that their proposal is supported on a managerial level, to avoid later surprises (e.g. their Work Programme or Training Programme not being supported). The mentor should have an active role in making sure that the proposal has the full support from all Parties involved.

6. Indicative timeline for the EUROfusion Researcher Grant evaluation

Launch of the call	12 May
Deadline for proposals	21 August
Check proposals for eligibility, etc.	31 August
Proposals transmitted to referees	3 September
Referees return the Individual Assessment Reports	5 October
1 st consensus meeting with referees (VC). In this meeting the candidates are shortlisted for the interviews.	12–16 October
Interviews	2 – 6 November
Final Assessment Reports by the referees	16 – 20 November
General Assembly endorsement	17–18 December

Annex I: Evaluation criteria, thresholds and weightings for the short-listing

Fusion Researcher Grants		
Criterion:	Threshold	Weighting
Quality of the thesis *	3/5	40%
Research project	3/5	40%
Scientific publications	2/5	10%
European / International background	1/5	10%

* PhD thesis for applicant relating to § 2.1 and the master (or equivalent) thesis in case of applicant relating to § 2.2

European / International background: although young researchers are not expected to have a huge international experience, a number of elements will already be taken into account in the evaluation of the candidate, such as Erasmus grants or equivalent stages, the languages spoken by the candidate will also be among the criteria (this will be checked during the interviews of the short-listed candidates).

The knowledge of several languages or some international background will be considered as a plus.

Proposals that fail to reach the threshold as indicated for each individual criterion and at least 75% in the total mark shall be excluded from the final ranking.

Annex II: Evaluation criteria for the interview.

Individual interviews will last about 25 minutes and will consist of

- a presentation by the candidate (about 10 minutes)
- questions by the interview board (about 15 minutes).

The evaluation criteria for the interview will be based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Threshold	Weighting
Quality of the presentation	3/5	50%
Scientific/technical background	3/5	50%

The final score is constituted of the sum of the two marks attributed at the end of the first stage assessment and during the interview, with a weight of respectively 40% and 60%. This with the note that the expert panel may decide to amend the marks for the work programme and training programme given in the IAR (see Section 3.3.3).

In the case of proposals with the same final score, the board will decide the priority order based on the mobility plan foreseen in the project or at the end of the two years grant (if any). Preference will be given to the research projects including visits or long stays in other laboratories during the two years of the Grant programme or at the end of it.