

LEaDing Fellows Postdoc Programme
Guide for evaluators
First call (1 February 2017- 31 March 2017)

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1. General
This guide describes the general principles and procedures that will be used in the evaluation and selection of proposals in the first call of the LEaDing Fellows Postdoc Programme. Candidates may use the guide as a checklist to ensure the quality of their proposal.

This guide is compliant with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the European Charter for Researchers and with the ethical procedures and regulations of the Commission. The evaluation of applications is carried out by the LEaDing Fellows Panel and external peers. The LEaDing Fellows Panel consists of 15 members, tenured staff drawn from the five partnering institutions. The peers will be senior researchers with a tenured position at a foreign university, company or (governmental) institute. The LEaDing Fellows Steering Committee oversees the selection process and takes the final decision on the candidate invitation list. The evaluation and selection process complies with the Guide for Applicants- Marie Sklodowska-Curie actions, co-funding of regional, national, and international programmes (COFUND).

Before reading this guide, evaluators should consult the programme’ website: [www.leadingfellows.eu](http://www.leadingfellows.eu).

# **2.** **Selection process and role of evaluators**

## 2.1 Selection process

The evaluation of the candidates proceeds in seven steps:

1. Applicants should submit their full proposal and all accompanying documents as one single PDF by email to leadingfellows@tudelft.nl and will receive confirmation of receipt.

2. All applications will be checked on completeness and formal eligibility at the LEaDing Fellows Programme Office soon after applying.

3. The LEaDing Fellows Panel together with peers will shortlist the applications based on the selection criteria. In case the number of applications exceeds 250, the process of shortlisting is based on the summary and CV.

4. External peers will assess and rank the shortlisted applications by reviewing the whole application applying the selection criteria.

5. If necessary for the selection process, candidates ranked around the cut-off point are invited for a skype interview, with 2 or more LEaDing Fellows Panel members and one external peer.

6. Based on the average score of the peer reviews and on a consensus meeting of the LEaDing Fellows Panel a ranked invitation list will be drafted.

7. The LEaDing Fellows Steering Committee will decide on the final invitation list.

## **2.2 Evaluators**

The evaluator conduct the evaluations on a personal basis. They are expected to be independent and objective. In the LEaDing Fellows Postdoc Programme three types of evaluators are identified who conduct evaluations in different steps of the selection process. The roles of the different types of evaluators are explained here.

### **2.2.1 LEaDing Fellows Panel**

The LEaDing Fellow Panel is responsible for candidate selection and will guard over the scientific quality of the fellowships. The fifteen members are involved in the following steps of the selection process:

*3. Shortlisting the applications*
The Panel, together with five peers, will shortlist the applications based on the selection criteria (see 2.3 and annex 2) to four times the number of candidates in relation to the number of available positions.

All applications (and panel members) are divided in three research domains:

* Humanities and Social Sciences;
* Physical Sciences and Engineering and
* Life sciences.

In this step of shortlisting the applications, every sub panel will review the applications in their research domain. Each sub panel will have an equal share (1/3) of the shortlist. Five peers will join the panel in this step of the selection process.

The scenarios below are carefully constructed and describe how many and which part of the applications panel members have to review. In every scenario the panel members or peers will review about 150 pages each. An exception is scenario 5, since the number of applications, and therefore number of pages, can vary. Every application will be reviewed by two panel members or peers.

Scenario 1: ≤ 80 applications
In case the number of applications is less than 80, the first step of the selection process will be skipped. This step is meant to bring back the number of applications to 4 times the number of available positions.

Scenario 2: 80 <>125
In case the number of applications is between 80 and 125, the whole application will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peer will check out 13 applications.

Scenario 3: 125 <> 250
In case the number of applications is between 125 and 250, only the summary, CV and motivation letter will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peer will check out 25 applications.

Scenario 4: 250 <> 350
In case the number of applications is between 250 and 350, only the summary and CV will be checked by the panel members. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peer will check out 35 applications.

Scenario 5: > 350
In case the number of applications is more than 350, only the summary and CV will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted.

*4. Assessment and ranking by external peers*
The LEaDing Fellow Panel will invite external peers to assess and rank the shortlisted applications. Based on the average score of the peer reviews and on a consensus meeting of the LEaDing Fellows Panel a ranked invitation list will be drafted.

*5. Skype interviews*
Optional if necessary: Candidates ranked around the cut-off point are invited for a skype interview, with two panel members and one foreign external peer. The interviews are assessed based on the selection criteria (see 2.3 and annex 2);

6*. Draft invitation list*
Based on the average score of the peer reviews, the eventual skype interviews and on a consensus meeting of the LEaDing Fellows Panel a ranked invitation list will be drafted.

7. *Final invitation list*
The LEaDing Fellows Steering Committee will decide on the final invitation list.

### 2.2.2 Peers joining the LEaDing Fellows Panel in shortlisting

Five peers will join the LEaDing Fellows Panel in shortlisting the applications to four times the available positions. These peers are senior researchers with a tenured position at a foreign university, company or (governmental) institute.

The peers are involved in the following steps of the selection process:

*3. Shortlisting the applications*The peers, together with the LEaDing Fellows Panel, will shortlist the applications based on the selection criteria (see 2.3 and annex 2) to four times the number of candidates in relation to the number of available positions.

All applications (and panel members and peers) are divided in three research domains:

* Humanities and Social Sciences;
* Physical Sciences and Engineering and
* Life sciences.

In the step of shortlisting the applications, every sub panel will review the applications in their research domain. Each sub panel will have an equal share (1/3) of the shortlist.

Scenarios are carefully constructed which describe how many and which part of the applications panel members have to review. In every scenario the panel members or peers will review about 150 pages each. An exception is scenario 5, since the number of applications, and therefore number of pages, can vary. Every application will be reviewed by two panel members or peers.

Scenario 1: ≤ 80 applications
In case the number of applications is less than 80, the first step of the selection process will be skipped. This step is meant to bring back the number of applications to 4 times the number of available positions.

Scenario 2: 80 <>125
In case the number of applications is between 80 and 125, the whole application will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peer will check out 13 applications.

Scenario 3: 125 <> 250
In case the number of applications is between 125 and 250, only the summary, CV and motivation letter will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peer will check out 25 applications.

Scenario 4: 250 <> 350
In case the number of applications is between 250 and 350, only the summary and CV will be checked by the panel members. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peers, the application will be shortlisted. In this scenario each panel member/peers will check out 35 applications.

Scenario 5: > 350
In case the number of applications is more than 350, only the summary an CV will be checked by the panel members/peers. They will individually score an application. Based on the average of the scores of two panel members/peer, the application will be shortlisted.

### 2.2.3 External peers reviewing the shortlisted proposals (external review)

The LEaDing Fellows Panel will invite external peers to review the shortlisted applications in the LEaDing Fellows Postdoc Programme.

The external peers are involved in the following steps of the selection process:

*4. Assessment and ranking by external peers*
All shortlisted proposals will independently be assessed and ranked by three peers. These peers are senior researchers with a tenured position at a foreign university, company or (governmental) institute. The peers will review the proposal based on the selection criteria (see 2.3 and annex 2). They will send in a written review with their scores and motivation to the LEaDing Fellow Programme Office.

Based on the average score of the peer reviews and on a consensus meeting of the LEaDing Fellows Panel a ranked invitation list will be drafted.

*5. Skype interviews*
Optionally if necessary, candidates ranked around the cut-off point are invited for a skype interview, with two panel members and one foreign external peer. The interviews are assessed based on the selection criteria (see 2.3 and annex 2).

## 2.3 Evaluation and selection

### **2.3.1 Eligibility criteria**

The LEaDing Fellows Programme Office will check all applications on completeness and eligibility. None of the evaluators is involved in this step of the process.

- Researchers of all nationalities are eligible, unless national, international or European legislation or embargos prohibit specific (combinations of (sub) disciplines and) countries of origin.
- The appointed fellows shall not have spent more than 12 months in the Netherlands in the 3 years immediately prior to recruitment date.
- The programme is open to incoming researchers having obtained their PhD before the recruitment date and less than 60 months prior. This application window can be extended with 6 months for pregnancy (per child), parental leave (6 months per child), 3 years for training for medical specialist or compulsory and reserve military service (actual time). Evidencing documentation must be added to the application.
- Applicants submit a proposal including a research project and a research training plan of their own design. Candidates should contact supervisors in the field of their interest to explore options in order to ensure a good fit.

Candidates submit applications consisting of:

* Summary of research proposal and training (1 page max.);
* Research proposal: concise description of the research content; specific research goals; originality; methodology and planning; form of ethical consideration; plan for development of results towards viable application (3 pages max.);
* Training plan: research skill widening and/or deepening, including meaningful exposure to (or collaboration with) industry or societal partners; plans for acquiring additional soft skills and transferable skills; impact on (inter-sectoral) career development (3 pages max.);
* CV and list of publications (4 pages max.);
* Motivation letter of the candidate (1 page max.);
* Support statement from the chair of the group that will host the fellow ([format on the programme website](http://www.leadingfellows.eu)).

2.3.2 Selection criteria
In all steps of the selection process the same selection criteria apply. The applications will be assessed taking into account the quality of the track record of the applicant, the research training plan and the research proposal. In all steps of the selection process the same criteria apply.

Quality of the research proposal (35 %):

* Useful, complementary relation to previously acquired research skills, balanced and optimized connection with PhD work and sensible choice of adjacent research fields;
* originality of the research proposal, research design, quality of the methods proposed, relevance for current research themes in the field, scientific innovation;
* expected scientific interaction between hosting group or department and LEaDing Fellow, can mutual advantage be expected from the fellow’s cooperation in the hosting group;
* opportunities for gaining experience in research related skills and practices such as drafting and publishing scientific articles, introducing new results to fellow researchers and graduate students, planning and organizing research projects, being involved in research grant scouting and application; intended inter university cooperation, specifically internship at one of the partners.

Quality of the individual training plan (35 %):

* Well aligned choice of research skills and non-academic, transferable skills to be acquired: choice of three courses from those provided;
* project impact resulting in an optimal starting point to obtain a research position in a specific field or a position in a non-academic career requiring a research background;
* meaningful cooperation and exposure to extra-university sectors: visits to or internships at public or industrial collaborators;
* intended dissemination and exploitation activities: dedicated to intended users, applications, and related to career plan.

Quality of the applicants’ track record (30 %):

* Curriculum vitae: honours or other special annotation during bachelor, master or PhD education; number and quality of publications taking into account the number of years after PhD incl. career breaks if any, and the publication customs in researcher’s field of work; obtained funding; academic recognition; relevant extra-curricular activities; relevant work experience extra-academic settings.
* Motivation letter: reflection on inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral career options.

For each criterion applications receive a score between 0.0 and 5.0 (decimal points permitted); the threshold score is 3.0 for each criterion, and 10.0 for the sum. The average score of the evaluators/peers counts.

|  |
| --- |
| Scoring table |
| 0 | Fail | Proposal fails or is incomplete |
| 1 | Poor | Inadequate, inherent weaknesses |
| 2 | Fair | Addresses criterion, significant weaknesses |
| 3 | Good | Addresses criterion well, some shortcomings |
| 4 | Very good | Addresses criterion very well, small (number of) shortcomings |
| 5 | Excellent | Addresses all relevant aspects, only minor shortcomings |

2.4 Evaluation Reports

To ensure a careful evaluation process, there is a thorough evaluation grid which evaluators are asked to fill. See annex 2.

The LEaDing Fellows Programme Office will send all information which is necessary for the evaluation to the panel members and peers. Evaluators/peers will be asked to send the evaluation grid back to the LEaDing Fellows Programme Office. Evaluators/peers will be informed in writing about deadlines.

The evaluation grid will be used to inform candidates whether their proposal is on the shortlist or not. Candidates will not see the evaluation grid.

Please keep in mind during the evaluation process:
- Do not consult with other evaluators;
- Do not contact the candidate under any circumstances;
- Do not be afraid to give your frank opinion and support it with an appropriate grade;
- Note that the grade alone is not enough for your evaluation to be well understood;
- Do avoid summarizing the application;
- Do focus on strong and weak points instead of general statements;
- Publication rates vary widely across disciplines;
- Do check the consistency of the grades and comments;
- Do only consider the material included in the application;
- Ethical issues are of considerable concern and you should make a note of those raised in the proposal.

3. Confidentiality and Conflict of interest

The LEaDing Fellows Programme Office takes all reasonable steps to ensure that evaluators are not faced with a conflict of interest in relation to the proposals on which the evaluator is required to give an opinion. On top of that the Programme Office will also take all measures necessary to ensure the confidentiality of the applicants and applications. To this end, all evaluators will be asked to sign a declaration that no conflict of interest exists and that they will respect the confidentiality of the proposals at the time of signing the declaration (see annex 1). They will also inform the Programme Office when such conflict of interest or confidentiality issues arise. When informed, the Programme Office will take all necessary action to remove the conflict of interest.

Annex 1: Declaration of Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

In the context of the LEaDing Fellows Postdoc Programme, I, undersigned [name, surname] ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….., understand that being involved in the evaluation of applications within the first call for proposals of the programme implies the use of confidential information.

***Confidentiality***
I agree and undertake:
- to only use the information confidential for the review;
- to neither reproduce nor disclose the confidential information;
- to take all preventative measures to prevent the disclosure of the confidential information;
- to destroy the confidential information, upon the completion and submission of the review.

***Conflict of interest***
I also declare that I have no:
- Involvement with the application(s), which means that I am not involved in the preparation of the application in any way.

-Involvement with the applicant(s), which means that I have no personal or professional relationship with the applicant nor any economic interest.

*Personal relationship*
Having a friendship, personal conflict or family relationship with the applicant(s).

*Professional relationship*Supervising or having supervised the doctoral work of the applicant(s);
collaborating with the applicant(s) on research projects and/or publications or planning to do so in future;
being colleagues within the same section or similar organisational unit or planning to be so in the future;
having a hierarchical relationship with the applicant(s), or planning to have such a relationship in the future, up to and including the level of a faculty or similar organisational unit;
a professional conflict.

*Economic interest*
Being in a position to derive some material advantage from participating in the decision-making process or from information obtained during that process.

- If I have any other involvements in applications or applicants in the programme or any of above mentioned involvements arise during the selection process, I will report this to the LEaDing Fellows Programme Office.

I commit myself to take all necessary measures to respect the above mentioned obligations.

Date:
Signature:

# **Annex 2: Evaluation Grid**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of the evaluator** |  |
| **Name of applicant** |  |
| **Proposal title**  |  |
| **Research domain** |  |

Please score each criterion a score between 0.0 and 5.0 (decimal points permitted).

|  |
| --- |
| Scoring table |
| 0 | Fail | Proposal fails or is incomplete |
| 1 | Poor | Inadequate, inherent weaknesses |
| 2 | Fair | Addresses criterion, significant weaknesses |
| 3 | Good | Addresses criterion well, some shortcomings |
| 4 | Very good | Addresses criterion very well, small (number of) shortcomings |
| 5 | Excellent | Addresses all relevant aspects, only minor shortcomings |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria 1: Quality of the research plan** | **comments** |
| Is there a useful, complementary relation to previously acquired research skills, balanced and optimized connection with PhD work and sensible choice of adjacent research fields? |  |
| Are the research proposal, research design, quality of the methods proposed original and are they relevant relevance for current research themes in the field? |  |
| What is the expected scientific interaction between hosting group or department and LEaDing Fellow? Can mutual advantage be expected from the fellow’s cooperation in the hosting group? |  |
| Are there opportunities for gaining experience in research related skills and practices such as drafting and publishing scientific articles, introducing new results to fellow researchers and graduate students, planning and organizing research projects, being involved in research grant scouting and application; intended inter university cooperation, specifically internship at one of the partners?  |  |
| **Score for criteria 1 and comments (Strong/Weak points)** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria 2: Quality of the training plan**  | **comments** |
| Is there a well aligned choice of research skills and non-academic, transferable skills to be acquired? |  |
| Does the project impact result in an optimal starting point to obtain a research position in a specific field or a position in a non-academic career requiring a research background? |  |
| Is there meaningful cooperation and exposure to extra-university sectors intended: visits to or internships at public or industrial collaborators? |  |
| Are there intended dissemination and exploitation activities: dedicated to intended users, applications, and related to career plan? |  |
| **Score for criteria 2 and comments (Strong/Weak points)** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria 3: Quality of the track record** | **comments** |
| What is the quality of the Curriculum vitae? honours or other special annotation during bachelor, master or PhD education; number and quality of publications taking into account the number of years after PhD incl. career breaks if any, and the publication customs in researcher’s field of work; obtained funding; academic recognition; relevant extra-curricular activities; relevant work experience extra-academic settings.  |  |
| Motivation letter: reflection on inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral career options |  |
| **Score for criteria 3 and comments (Strong/Weak points)** |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Overall comments**  |
|  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Score criteria 1**  | **Score criteria 2**  | **Score criteria 3**  |
|  |  |  |