

## **Annex I – Notice of the Call**

### **Evaluation Guide**

**Maria de Sousa Call for PhD Studentships – 2022**

**SEAGULL – Seeking Epidemiological and Virological Answers**

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**May 2022**

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## ACRONYMS

**BD** – PhD Studentship

**COI** – Conflict of Interests

**EBI** – Research Fellowship Holder Statute

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

**MyFCT** – FCT Information and Management System of FCT

**CV** – *Curriculum Vitae*

**RBI** – FCT Regulation for Studentships and Fellowships

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Guide is the document prepared to help evaluators and applicants understand the procedure associated to applications evaluation of the Maria de Sousa PhD Studentships Call – 2022: SEAGULL -Seeking Epidemiological and Virological Answers.

**No information included in this Guide replaces or overlaps with what is stated in the Research Fellowship Holder Statute (EBI), the FCT Regulation for Studentships and Fellowships (RBI) and the Notice of the Call.**

## 2. EVALUATION PROCESS

### 2.1 Guiding principles for peer-review evaluation

In this call FCT is responsible to ensure the scientific quality of the peer review process. The application content represents the essential core of peer review, which requires a global and integrated vision of all components of the applicant's academic, scientific, professional and civic paths, of the research work plan and of the conditions for its development. The application must be evaluated taking into consideration its originality, consistency and coherence, and its contribution to the progress of knowledge in all its components. Evaluators shall give precedence to quality and originality over quantity, when analysing applicants and supervisors' CVs. Evaluators' impartiality, objectivity and transparency of the evaluation process, are fundamental principles for the assessment of each application, regardless of origin or identity of the applicant, supervisors or affiliation institutions, safeguarding any situations of conflict of interests (COI).

### 2.2 Conflict of Interests (COI)

If the panel chair or any other member of the evaluation panel is in a situation of conflict of interests (COI) regarding any of the applications submitted to the panel, it must be declared to FCT as early as the first contact with the application is made.

Panel members in any declared COI situation cannot be assigned by the panel chair as readers of the respective applications and will be prevented from contacting in any way with the applications or their evaluation, throughout the evaluation process.

The COI declarations must be mandatorily included in the panel meeting report; the panel chair, in collaboration with FCT, is responsible for including the list of declared COI situations that should comprise the application reference, name of the applicant and the respective panel member who declared COI.

The situations of COI of the chair, evaluators and external reviewers include, but are not limited to:

- a) Belonging to the **same academic organizational unit<sup>1</sup> and/or the same R&D unit<sup>2</sup> of the host institution** of the work plan associated to the application;
- b) Belonging to the **same academic organizational unit and/or the same R&D unit** of the **supervisor(s)** associated to the application;
- c) Belonging to the scientific committee of the Doctoral Programme indicated in the application;
- d) Having published scientific work with the applicant or with the applicant's supervisor(s) in the **three years prior<sup>3</sup>** to the date of opening of the application period;
- e) Having **on-going scientific collaboration with the applicant or her/his supervisor(s)**;
- f) Being related (**family relationship**) to the applicant or her/his supervisor(s);
- g) Having a **scientific or personal conflict** with the applicant or her/his supervisor(s);
- h) Being in **any other situation that may raise doubts** to her/himself, to third parties, namely the applicant or an external entity, about their capacity to assess the application impartially.

### 2.3 Terms of Reference and Confidentiality

All panel members, including evaluators, panel chair, as well as potential external reviewers, who do not participate in the panel but who collaborate with it, establish with FCT the commitment to respect a set of responsibilities essential to the evaluation process, such as **impartiality, declaration of potential COI and confidentiality**. The confidentiality must be fully protected and ensured, during all the evaluation process, in order to guarantee the independence of all opinions produced. All panel members, as well as external reviewers, are responsible for ensuring confidentiality about the entire evaluation process and the content of the applications, being prevented from copying, citing or using any type of material contained therein.

### 2.4 Constitution of the Evaluation Panel

The evaluation panel is constituted by experts with acknowledged scientific merit and experience in the fields of knowledge involved in this call. The evaluation panel is also established according to coverage of scientific fields and sub-fields, gender balance, geographical and institutional diversity (including higher education institutions, R&D units, state laboratories and associated laboratories, companies, among others).

All the panel members, including the chair and external reviewers that may eventually collaborate with the panel, **may never be part of the supervising team** of applicants with applications submitted under

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<sup>1</sup> Academic organizational unit refers to the department, if the structure of the faculty/school is organized by organizational units of a departmental nature, or to the faculty/school if not.

<sup>2</sup> In case there are more than one cluster/pole of the same R&D unit, the entire institution should be considered, regardless of the indicated cluster/pole

<sup>3</sup> It will be considered for this purpose the printing date or the publication date of the book, volume of the edition or of the journal issue.

the evaluation panel.

The assessment work developed by the panel is coordinated by one or two panel chairs, under FCT's invitation. The chair has the responsibility for assuring that the evaluation exercise is carried out with **transparency, independence and equity**.

The constitution of the evaluation Panel is made public in the FCT's website before the beginning of the evaluation period.

## 2.5 Role and Responsibilities of the Panel Chair

In collaboration with FCT, the chair is responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that the evaluation exercise is carried out with transparency, independence and equality;
- b) Allocating to each application two evaluators, appointing them as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> readers, considering their fields of expertise and the application's subfield and the declared COIs;
- c) Identifying applications that may need to be evaluated by external reviewers;
- d) Managing the identified COIs;
- e) Ensuring that all panel members follow the guidelines and clarifications provided by FCT throughout the process, as well as the harmonization of evaluation parameters that the panel may establish;
- f) Verifying, in a joint action with the panel members, the suitability of the applications to the panel, identifying any applications outside the scope of the panel that may, eventually, be considered as "Non-assessable";
- g) Ensuring that all panel members acknowledge and equitably apply the established criteria and sub-criteria, and the respective weighing of such criteria and sub-criteria, as harmonized by the panel;
- h) Assuring the compliance with the deadlines granted to evaluators in all the evaluation stages, namely to prepare the individual and pre-consensus evaluation reports;
- i) Ensuring that, when filling in the evaluation reports, evaluators justify their grading with clear and substantive arguments that allow understanding the correspondence between both;
- j) Moderating the panel meeting and ensuring a collegial process of decision;
- k) Assuring that the final evaluation report is prepared until the end of the plenary meeting;
- l) Guaranteeing that all the final evaluation reports produced by the panel, that will be communicated to applicants, are consistent and coherent with each other, that the comments demonstrate the relative merit of the applications and are in accordance with the provisions of this guide, in the Notice of the Call, in the applicable legislation and with the respective scores;
- m) Preparing the panel meeting report, together with all the panel members;
- n) Collaborating with FCT to solve any eventual unexpected event that may occur before, during and/or after the panel meeting;

- o) Coordinating the preliminary hearing process, assuring the compliance with the previous paragraphs.

## 2.6 Remote and Panel Meeting Evaluation

### 2.6.1 Remote evaluation

Before the beginning of the evaluation process, all panel members (including chair) will have to indicate on the FCT's information system, MyFCT, the applications with which they are in a situation of conflict of interests, preventing access to its details. The list of COIs declared will be included in the panel meeting report, which will be made available to the applicants.

The remote evaluation is divided in two stages: i) individual evaluation and ii) pre-consensus evaluation. In the first stage, each evaluator completes their individual evaluation forms as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader, and in the second stage, the 1<sup>st</sup> reader is responsible to produce the pre-consensus report that should reflect the harmonized analysis of both readers allocated to the application.

#### 2.6.1.1 Individual Evaluation

- a) Each application is individually assessed by two panel members who are not in a situation of COI with the applicant and respective supervisor(s) and affiliation institution(s).
- b) If any of the evaluators identifies an additional situation of COI concerning any application(s) attributed to her/him, it must be immediately and formally declared to FCT and to the panel chair, who is responsible for the reallocation of the application(s).
- c) **Whenever justified**, the chair should **request to FCT the opinion of external reviewers**, during the individual remote evaluation period, considering the transdisciplinarity or specific aspects of the proposal and the institutional collaborations described in the application.
- d) An application shall be considered **non-assessable** when it **strays considerably from the objectives establish in point 1 of the Notice of the Call**. Applications in such conditions should be immediately reported to FCT by the chair and/or the evaluators that identified the situation. Before considering an application as non-assessable, the evaluation panel should analyse the framing of the work plan main theme in the call's objectives and jointly validate this decision during the panel meeting. The decision must be made explicit in the final evaluation report and justified in the panel meeting report.
- e) An application shall also be considered **non-assessable** when a **violation of at least one of the mandatory admissibility requirements of the applicant or application is identified**, whenever it has not been identified in the prior stage of administrative review of admissibility (as, for example, the case of submitting the same file twice in the recommendation field).
- f) Each evaluator must fill in an individual evaluation report for each of the applications that they are assigned to, score the three evaluation criteria separately (see section 5. Notice of the Call) and prepare the respective comments to clearly justify the score awarded.

### 2.6.1.2 Pre-consensus Evaluation

At the end of the individual evaluation stage, the 1<sup>st</sup> reader is responsible for preparing a pre-consensus report within the pre-established deadline that takes place before the panel meeting.

The pre-consensus report should reflect the harmonization of the individual reports prepared by the two readers, also considering the external reviewers' assessment, whenever applicable.

### 2.6.2 Panel Meeting

The panel meeting consists on the reunion of all panel members, whose presence is mandatory, where the **collegial discussion of all applications submitted to the panel** is promoted and moderated by the panel chair. This meeting comprises the following:

- a) Analysis and joint discussion of all applications, taking into consideration the individual and pre-consensus evaluation reports previously produced which constitute the working documents for the panel;
- b) During the meeting, the 1<sup>st</sup> readers must be prepared to present a summary of strengths and eventual weaknesses of each application that has been assigned to them. The chair is responsible to promote the debate, encouraging the participation of all panel members;
- c) The final evaluation of each panel is performed by discussing the relative merit of all the applications, after which the final score for each application is established. If any panel member is in a situation of conflict of interests with any application, he/she will not be able to participate in the discussion. If this situation applies to the chair(s), another panel member without COI should be assigned to moderate the meeting and the discussion of these applications;
- d) The 1<sup>st</sup> reader is responsible for writing the final evaluation reports, taking into consideration the collegial decision of the panel;
- e) All the final evaluation reports produced must be consistent and coherent with each other, also exhibiting a correspondence between the scores and respective comments;
- f) All panel members are responsible for the discussion of the relative merit of all the applications. From the collegial discussion shall result a single provisional ranked list, per evaluation panel.

## 2.7 Comments to be transmitted to Applicants

Each panel should pay attention to present, in a clear, consistent and coherent manner, the arguments that led to the scores awarded **to each of the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria**; the eventual disability bonuses and respective degree of disability should also be mentioned. It is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that the panel justifies the scores with substantive arguments that allow the understanding of the meaning of the evaluation, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each application for each evaluation criteria (see point 6 of the Notice of the Call).

In case the applicant presents more than one graduate and/or master degree, the panel should indicate which of the degrees has been selected for the calculation of sub-criterion A1 – Academic Career. In case of academic degrees obtained in a foreign country, the panel should mention if the applicant has submitted, or not, the respective recognition and/or conversion to the Portuguese grading scale.

The comments in the final evaluation reports should comply with the following recommendations:

- a) Do not use the 1<sup>st</sup> person; alternatively, as an example, use "The panel considers that (...)";
- b) Avoid descriptive comments or that are a mere summary of elements included in the application;
- c) Avoid generic and/or vague comments, such as "very weak work plan", "adequate CV", "excellent hosting conditions", etc.;
- d) Use analytic and impartial language, avoiding depreciative comments about the applicant, the work plan proposed, the supervisors, etc.;
- e) Avoid asking questions since the applicant cannot reply.

## 2.8. Panel Meeting Report

The panel meeting report is a responsibility of all panel members; the chair is responsible for writing it down, being also responsible for representing the entire panel.

The panel meeting report must include:

- a) The name and affiliation of all panel members;
- b) The indication of applications considered as "non-assessable";
- c) The panel adopted methodology used for particular cases;
- d) The provisional ranked list of all the applications evaluated by the panel, in descending order of the final score;
- e) The list of COI declared by all the panel members.