EVALUATION GUIDE

STIMULUS OF SCIENTIFIC EMPLOYMENT

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT CALL

Associate Laboratories (CEEC Inst-LA) 2022
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1. INTRODUCTION

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, is the public Agency that supports Science and Technology in all areas of knowledge. FCT aims to promote research talent through advanced training and consolidation of scientific careers, to support the development of research centres that are international players in their field, to foster international competitiveness and visibility of the Research and Innovation carried out in Portugal, to facilitate access of the scientific community to state-of-the-art research infrastructures, and to encourage knowledge transfer between research units and the private sector, as well as Public Administration.

This call aims at funding scientific employment contracts for PhD holders centred on an institutional scientific employment programme. It is based on peer reviewing proposals submitted by applicant institutions. The call entails a public announcement (in Portuguese) outlining the required features of the applications and the evaluation criteria to be applied, as well as the number and specificities of contracts to be funded.

The present call will be open from 25 May until 21 July, 2022.

This document outlines the evaluation process and procedures adopted in the Call for the Stimulus of Scientific Employment – Institutional Support (CEEC Inst) for Associate Laboratories 2022, announced by FCT in April 2022.

2. SCIENTIFIC EMPLOYMENT – INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Strengthening scientific employment is a central issue in Portugal. In this context, FCT provides financial support to encourage recruitment of new researchers in the context of career development plans, thereby providing institutional renewal and stimulating scientific employment.

FCT issued the Regulation of Scientific Employment (REC) in 2017, updated in December 2019, and two instruments were put in place to promote scientific employment:

- An Individual Support for hiring PhD holders by R&D Portuguese institutions. Applicants submit an individual application to a yearly call launched by FCT (CEEC IND);

- An Institutional Support for development of scientific employment by PhD holders in R&D Portuguese institutions (CEEC INST). Institutions apply with a scientific employment plan with positions to be funded. It is their responsibility to select the researchers to be hired.

The present call aims to support and strengthen scientific careers in Associate Laboratories based on their specific employment programmes with a target of hiring a total of 120 PhD holders. Researchers to be hired should be highly motivated scientists seeking to develop, carry out and coordinate top quality research related to the support of public policies in science and technology in the Associate Laboratories.

An Associate Laboratory is a R&D unit, or a consortium of R&D units, with significant critical mass and excellent research capacity to pursue objectives of national science and technology policy and to provide research careers. The Associate Laboratories are formally consulted by the Government and by the Public Administration regarding the definition of national scientific and technological policy instruments. After the
last evaluation (launched in 2020), there is currently a total of 40 Associate Laboratories in Portugal as compiled in the Atlas of Associate Laboratories published by FCT.

The present call aims at supporting the Associate Laboratories in their strengthening of scientific employment by funding contracts for Ph.D. holders. It is also an objective to contribute to positively stimulate the Associate Laboratories that received comparatively less funding for the period 2021-2025 (calculated on a FTE researcher basis). Therefore, this call will fund a total of 120 contracts, of which 90 are awarded to the eligible Associate Laboratories and 30 will be additionally awarded to the eligible Associate Laboratories with less than 10,000€/FTE researcher for 2021-2025.

Each Associate Laboratory can only submit one application and request a maximum of 10 contracts of researchers (PhD holder). These contracts can be celebrated for different activities contributing to R&D, including research, qualified technical work and science management and communication. The types and levels of contracts are as follows:

**Fixed term** contracts with a duration of up to 6 years **at two levels of career stages** (Decree-Law no. 57/2016 of August 29th):

a) **Junior Researcher**: Ph.D. holders for 5 or less years with a reduced post-doctoral experience in the scientific area of application;

b) **Assistant Researcher**: Ph.D. holders with more than 5 years of post-doctoral research, with relevant experience in the scientific area of application but with no need to demonstrate scientific independence.

**Permanent contracts** in the three specific levels of the statute of research careers (Decree-Law 124/1999 of April 20th):

a) **Assistant Researcher** *(Investigador Auxiliar)*

b) **Principal Researcher** *(Investigador Principal)*

c) **Coordinating Researcher** *(Investigador Coordenador)*

### 3. SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION

Applications are submitted online via a dedicated FCT web application. The application includes the following sections:

**1. Associate Laboratory identification**

1.1 Main Management Institution

1.2 Other Management Institution(s)

1.3 Main R&D Unit and Proponent

1.4 Other R&D Units
1.5 Detailed description of the objectives of scientific and technological policy and the activities to be pursued by the Associate Laboratory, including the deadlines to be observed (PDF file)

1.6 Funding approved for 2021-2025

1.7 Funding per FTE for 2021-2025

2. Associate Laboratory: Hosting Conditions and Scientific Employment Plan (2021-2025)

2.1. AL Hosting Conditions and Scientific Employment Plan (2021-2025)

Hosting conditions:
- description of the human resources strategy of the Associate Laboratory (recruitment, career development, career integration and retention of researchers and other professionals with Ph.D)
- description of the articulation between the institutions that compose the Associate Laboratory (for recruitment and retention of PhD holders, including integration in careers).

Scientific Employment Plan:
- description of the areas to be reinforced or developed with the proposed contracts
- description of the contribution of the new contracts to the Associate Laboratory’s strategic objectives, namely those related with public policies.

2.2. The expected contributions of the Scientific Employment Plan (2021-2025) to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030: selection of up to 6 SDGs and justification).

3. Research Units of the Associate Laboratory

A. Profile of the Associate Laboratory research staff (for each of the Research Units that compose the AL)

A.1. Total number of integrated PhD holders on 31 December, 2021 – Total Number and FTE
A.2. Total number of integrated PhD holders, with a permanent appointment in the research career or in the technical career (excluding the teaching career), registered on 31 December, 2021 – Total Number and FTE
A.3. Total number of integrated PhD holders, with a permanent appointment in the teaching career, registered on 31 December, 2021 – Total Number and FTE
A.4. Total number of integrated PhD holders, with a legal research contract, registered on 31 December, 2021 – Total Number and FTE (excluding those in A.2 and A.3)

B. Number of contracts requested for financial support (for each of the Research Units that compose the AL)

B.1. Decree Law 57/2016 - For each requested contract the following information is provided:
   a) Level (Junior or Assistant researcher)
   b) Role (Researcher, Technician, Science Management and Communication, Other support personnel)
c) Scientific area and Title of the work plan

B.2 Decree Law 124/1999 - For each requested permanent employment contract the following information is provided:
   a) Level (Assistant Researcher/Investigador Auxiliar, Principal Researcher/Investigador Principal or Coordinating Researcher/Investigador Coordenador)
   b) Role (Researcher, Technician, Science Management and Communication, Other support personnel)
   c) Scientific area and Title of the work plan

Sums of contracts requested for financial support per Unit and the total for the AL:
   a) Decree Law 57/2016
   b) Decree Law 124/1999

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Two evaluation criteria will be used:

A - Hosting conditions and institutional practices of the Associate Laboratory (40%)

B - Scientific Employment Plan of the Associate Laboratory (60%)

Criterion A

This criterion considers the hosting conditions of the Associate Laboratory for researchers and other scientific staff, as well as current practices of recruitment and the integration of highly qualified scientific personnel in the associated research units. The following sub-criteria will be assessed:

A1. Present human resources (HR) strategy for recruitment, career development and retention of researchers and other professionals, considering:
   a) Adequacy between the total number and total FTE of integrated PhD holders in each R&D Unit in 31/12/2021, as well as the total, for the Associate Laboratory for the objectives and activities of the Associate Laboratory for the 2021-2025 (field 1.5, Grant Agreement);
   b) Recruitment of PhD holders with permanent positions, for different careers (number and FTE), in each R&D Unit, until 31/12/2021, as well as the total, for the Associate Laboratory and how this fits the objectives and activities of the Associate Laboratory for 2021-2025 (field 1.5, Grant Agreement);
   c) Career development activities planned by the Associate Laboratory or its PhD holders, such as scientific and technical training, soft skills training, networking and collaborations, sponsorship for participation in scientific conferences and meetings, in-house grants or fellowships, stimuli for technology transfer & entrepreneurship activities;
   d) Strategy for talent attraction, including through permanent or open-ended positions, and retention of talent in research and other science professions.
A.2. Institutional Articulation: articulation and collaborative organization between the institutions that compose the Associate Laboratory, in the different aspects of the overall HR strategy, namely talent attraction and hiring practices, integration in careers, career development (including the activities mentioned above in A.1 - c)) and retention of researchers and other science professionals.

**Weighting factors**

\[ A = 0.7 \ A1 + 0.3 \ A2 \]

**Criterion B**

The evaluation of the merit of the Scientific Employment Plan for the period 2021-2025 will be based on the following sub-criteria:

**B1. Recruitment strategy for 2021-2025:** adequacy of the proposed new contracts to:
   a. the reinforcement and development of the scientific areas of the Associate Laboratory;
   b. the strategic objectives and activities of the Associate Laboratory for 2021-2025;
   c. the human resources strategy of the Associate Laboratory laid out in field 2.1 of the application.

**B2. Adequacy of requested contracts to the career strengthening in the Associate Laboratory:** how the number and characteristics (scientific areas and roles) of the required contracts fit the strategy of careers strengthening (research, technical and others) and retaining talent.

**B3. Public policy objectives:** expected contributions of the new contracts to the design and promotion of science and technology policies in the framework of scientific, health, environmental, cultural, social, economic or political challenges, as set out by the Associate Laboratory for 2021-2025;

**B4. Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG 2030):** contribution of the Scientific Employment Plan 2021-2025 to the selected SDGs 2030 considering the relation between each planned new contract and specific goals and targets.

**Weighting factors**

\[ B = 0.3 \ B1 + 0.3 \ B2 + 0.3 \ B3 + 0.1 \ B4 \]

5. **SCORING SYSTEM**

The scoring system for each sub-criterion uses a 5-point scale, using integers only. The maximum score is 5 and the minimum is 1.

Each criterion is obtained by the respective formula and has one decimal place.

The Final Score (FS) is given by the formula:

\[ FS = 0.4A + 0.6B \]

and is presented with two decimal places.

The minimum merit threshold for a proposal to be considered for funding is a Final Score of 3.00.
6. EVALUATION PROCESS

6.1 CONSTITUTION OF THE EVALUATION PANELS

The evaluation will be performed by a panel of international reviewers coordinated by a national expert, appointed by FCT of recognised scientific and academic merit and experience in institutional management and evaluation of highly qualified scientific human resources, and ensuring representation of the scientific areas covered by the Associate Laboratories.

The constitution of the Evaluation Panel is made public at the FCT website.

6.2 EVALUATION STAGES

The evaluation process of the applications comprises the following stages:

1) Applications eligibility and assignment to reviewers
2) Remote evaluation
   a) Individual phase
   b) Consensus phase
3) Panel Meeting

APPLICATIONS ELIGIBILITY AND ASSIGNMENT

FCT will check the eligibility of the submitted applications according to the required criteria described in the announcement. However, an application can be declared ineligible at any stage of evaluation. If any doubt arises during the evaluation process, the Panel Chair and FCT should be informed.

Each application will be remotely assessed by three panel members, one lead reviewer (1st reader/rapporteur) and two 2nd readers.

The Panel Chair will be responsible for the assignment of the applications to the respective lead reviewer and 2nd readers. A given panel member will be either lead reviewer or second reader for a maximum of 15 applications.

The distribution of the applications to panel members must consider any declared Col, as well as the matching of professional and scientific expertise with the scientific fields of the proponent Associate Laboratory. The occurrence of interdisciplinarity will also be taken into account by the Panel Chair.

REMOTE EVALUATION

a) INDIVIDUAL PHASE

Before starting the evaluation, reviewers must declare whether or not a Col is identified by her/him for each particular application.
In case of a disqualifying CoI, the Panel Chair and FCT should be informed and the application reassigned to another reviewer by the Chair. In the case of a potential CoI, the panel member should notify FCT so that it is clarified, after a proper analysis, if an unbiased evaluation may take place or if the conflict should be considered as disqualifying. For more information on CoIs, please see Section 7.2.

Each reader must submit an individual report with their assessment for each application, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the application for each sub-criterion.

The Final Score (FS) of each application will be calculated considering the weight given to each criterion (please see section 5) and is presented with two decimal places.

b) CONSENSUS PHASE

For each application, the panel member appointed as 1st reader is responsible for preparing the consensus report to be submitted to the Panel based on the three reviews.

The consensus report, similar in structure to the individual reports, is the starting point for the discussion during the panel meeting. This report includes a proposal of the final score, and of the number and type of contracts that the readers agree should be supported by FCT for each application considering the proposed final score, the requested positions and the size of the Associate Laboratory.

PANEL MEETING

The panel meeting, coordinated by the Panel Chair, will take place by videoconference, to proceed with the following activities:

- Ensure that each application receives a fair judgment and is discussed appropriately;
- Prepare a provisional ranked list of all applications under evaluation;
- Prepare a panel meeting report (minutes) with a summary of the meeting, that should include:
  a) names and affiliations of the panel members;
  b) the identification of any disqualifying or potential conflicts of interest.
  c) information on the evaluation methodology, beyond what is stated in this Guide, namely on the evaluation rationale to propose the contracts to each Associate Laboratory;
  d) the provisional ranked list of all applications;
  e) The indication of number and type of contracts to be funded for each eligible application, totalling 90 contracts;
  f) The indication of number and type of contracts to be funded additionally to the eligible applicants with less than 10,000€/FTE researcher (2021-2025) as Associate Laboratory funding, totalling 30 contracts.
This report will be signed by the Panel Chair, after receiving the agreement of all panel members.

Only the applications with final scores equal to or above 3.00 qualify for funding.

6.3 FEEDBACK TO BE TRANSMITTED TO APPLICANTS

The evaluation comments should be clearly focused on the specific content of the application and highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of the application, also showing the reasons underlying the given score.

- Comments must be:
  - Coherent with the attributed scores;
  - Clear and consistent, and include strengths and weaknesses of the application for each sub-criterion;
  - Polite and use dispassionate and analytical language.

- Comments must not:
  - Use dismissive statements about the application, the institutions involved or the concerned scientific fields;
  - Give a description or a summary of the application;
  - Use the first person or equivalent (e.g., “I think...”, “This reviewer finds...”). Instead, use expressions such as “The panel...” or “It is considered...”;
  - Ask questions, as the applicant institution(s) will not be able to answer them;
  - Provide advice for improving the application;
  - Have contradicting statements.

The quality of the comments to be transmitted to the applicant institutions is of paramount importance and part of the evaluation process, therefore being a major task of the evaluation panel.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

7.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

The confidentiality of applications must be protected. All reviewers involved in the evaluation are asked not to copy, quote or otherwise use material from the applications. Reviewers are also requested to sign a statement of confidentiality relative to the contents of the applications and to the results of the evaluation. The first time a reviewer has access to the evaluation area, will have to confirm the following statement:

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Thank you for accepting to participate in the scientific evaluation of the Stimulus of Scientific Employment – Institutional Support submitted to the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT)
The reader of this message pledges, on his/her honour, not to quote or use in any way the contents of the applications, nor to make available, other than to the FCT or the Evaluation Panel, the results of the evaluation.

7.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST (Col)

Experts with first-degree relationships, domestic partnership or married to Dean, Director, President, or member of any Board of Directors of an applicant institution, are hindered from being a member of the evaluation panel.

Any Col must be declared prior to the evaluation process.

DISQUALIFYING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In case a disqualifying conflict of interests is identified for an application, the panel member cannot evaluate it nor participate in its discussion. Circumstances that should be interpreted as a disqualifying Col are the following:

1. Personal or financial interest in the application's success;
2. Current or planned close scientific cooperation with the applicant institution;
3. Affiliation, or pending transfer, to any Department, Institution or Research Centre involved in the application;
4. Be, or plan to in the next 5 years, an active member in a council or similar supervisory board of the Department, Institution or Research Centre of the applicant institution.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In the case of a potential Col, the Panel Member should notify FCT in order to clarify it. After a proper analysis, it will be decided if s/he is able to perform an unbiased evaluation or if the conflict should rather be considered as disqualifying. A potential Col exists in the following circumstances:

5. Relationships other than first-degree, marriage or domestic partnership, or other personal ties or conflicts with Dean, Director, President, or member of any Board of Directors of an applicant institution;
6. Participation in University bodies other than those listed under no. 4 of disqualifying Col, e.g., Scientific Advisory Committees;
7. Involvement in a project or other activities with the applicant institution;
8. Any other circumstance the reviewer feels that may cause her/him not be impartial in the evaluation.
In case of a disqualifying CoI, the reviewer will not be able to proceed with the evaluation. The reviewer should immediately inform the Panel Chair and the FCT team, so that the application may be reassigned. The Panel meeting report must mention disqualifying CoIs of all panel members.

8. PRELIMINARY HEARINGS

Once the provisional ranked lists of the evaluation results are communicated, applicant institutions may use their right to dispute the proposed decision in the Preliminary Hearing phase, which takes place during the 10 working days following the communication of provisional results.

After this period, panel members are asked to give support to FCT through the analysis of submitted appeals that applicants may consider relevant. The Chair should guarantee the quality of the comments to be transmitted to the applicants.

Comments of scientific nature are analysed by the Evaluation panel that previously evaluated the application, which is also responsible for correcting possible errors or clarifying alleged inaccuracies.

The analysis of these comments is neither a second assessment of the application nor an additional opportunity for the applicant institutions present new information. It should only serve to identify any error that may have occurred during the evaluation and that is now addressed by the applicant institution. Any identified error should be corrected, and the score may be changed accordingly or remain the same.

The applicant AL must submit their Preliminary hearings’ comments in English.