

Guide for Peer Reviewers
Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program
Call for Proposals - 2017

February 2017

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 FCT MISSION

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT), the Portuguese foundation for science and technology, is the public agency responsible for implementing the Portuguese government's Science and Technology policy.

FCT started its operations in August 1997, succeeding the previous equivalent agency, JNICT, created in the 1980s.

FCT's mission is to continuously promote the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge in Portugal, exploring opportunities to attain the highest international standards in the creation of knowledge, in any scientific or technological domain, and to stimulate the diffusion of that knowledge and its contribution to improve education, health, the environment, and the quality of life and well-being of citizens.

This mission is mainly accomplished through the funding, subsequent to peer review, of applications submitted by institutions, research teams or individuals, in public calls. Funding is also awarded through cooperation agreements and other forms of support, in partnership with universities and other public or private institutions, in Portugal and abroad.

FCT's main roles are:

- To promote, finance, monitor and evaluate science and technology institutions, programs, projects and training of human resources;
- To promote and support infrastructure for scientific research and technological development;
- To promote the diffusion of scientific and technological culture and knowledge, especially when relevant for educational purposes in close collaboration with the Ciência Viva agency;
- To stimulate the updating, interconnectivity, strengthening and availability of science and technology information sources.

FCT funds all areas of knowledge, including exact, natural and health sciences, engineering, social sciences and humanities.

1.2 CMU PORTUGAL MISSION

The [Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program](#) is an education, research, and innovation platform that connects Portuguese research institutions, universities and companies in cooperation with Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). The partnership was launched in 2006 and renewed for five more years in 2012, to create new knowledge in key focused areas of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) by means of cutting-edge research, world-class graduate education, and a close connection with Portuguese industry, aiming at placing Portugal at the forefront of science and innovation.

The activities of the CMU Portugal Program are funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), supported by the Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas (CRUP), and co-financed by business partners and by CMU.

The key instruments of the Program are:

- Talent development of faculty, students and industry professionals, through dual degree Ph.D. and Professional Master programs, a Faculty Exchange Program, and an Undergraduate Internships Program;
- Research and innovation in potentially commercializable technologies, through multidisciplinary projects, Entrepreneurial Research Initiatives (ERIs) and exploratory projects (Early Bird Projects and Exploratory Research projects); a very early stage acceleration program (inRes); and industry collaboration through an Industry Affiliates program.

2 CALL FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS - 2017

2.1 CALL OVERVIEW

In order to identify and assess emerging key strategic areas for a potential third phase, is opened within the scope of the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program (CMU Portugal), the fourth Call for Proposals in Phase II, this time for Exploratory Research Projects.

Exploratory Research Projects are designed to assist teams of researchers from Portuguese institutions, Carnegie Mellon University and industry partners, to jumpstart high-impact potential research activities of strategic relevance for the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program. The proposals should be high-risk/high-reward and show promise and a strategy for significant future expansion of project goals.

For this Call, the Program is seeking proposals in the following areas:

1. Integrative research based in the context of the Atlantic International Research Center ([AIR Center](#));
2. Data Science and Engineering;
3. Computer Science;
4. Electrical and Computer Engineering;
5. Applied Mathematics;
6. Technology, Management and Policy.

The area of Computer Science includes, but is not limited to, sub-areas such as: Computer Science; Computer Science - Robotics; Software Engineering; Language Technologies; Human Computer Interaction. The area of Technology Management and Policy includes, but is not limited to, sub-areas such as: Engineering and Public Policy; Technological Change and Entrepreneurship.

Exploratory Research Projects will often be aimed at formulating and launching a longer-term project, i.e., they will not be required to achieve, within their own scope, the fully developed and ambitious final results that will be typical of longer-term projects. However, the proposals must be very concrete on the activities and outcomes that the consortium actually proposes to carry out and achieve in the scope of the Exploratory Research Project, and clearly link them to its longer-term objectives.

The [2017 Call for Exploratory Research Projects of the CMU Portugal Program](#) is open from February 17 to April 12, 2017. Proposals are submitted online, at a specific [FCT site](#), on a specially designed web application.

According to the [Public Announcement](#) and the [Terms of Reference](#) for this call:

- The funding conditions establish one year as the maximum duration of the project and a maximum funding of 100,000 Euros for Portuguese research institutions in each Exploratory Research Project;
- The proposal consortium must include at least two partner Portuguese research institutions and at least a research team from Carnegie Mellon University.

The PI candidates have at their disposal extensive documentation to guide them through the call, in particular:

- The Public [Announcement of the Call](#);
- [Terms of Reference](#) for the Exploratory Research Projects Call for Proposals 2017;
- [Regulations for Projects Exclusively Funded by National Funds](#) that establish the rules under which the proposals are accepted and evaluated, and the funded projects have to be managed;
- [Guidelines for Proposal Writing](#) with a set of suggestions on how to write a good proposal;
- A set of [FAQs](#) about Calls;
- Instructions on [how to use the Project Call portal](#).

This section states the main aspects of the Regulations concerning the scientific evaluation.

2.2 MAIN RULES

According to the regulations governing the access to funding of Scientific Research and Technological Development projects:

- The content of the application **should be written in English**; a version in Portuguese of the title and the summary is also required.
- Projects whose approval would make the PI or any member of the team exceed 100% of time dedicated to FCT research projects will not be funded. This condition is to be verified by FCT.
- Each PI must have a minimum of 30% of his/her time allocated to the project. For the remaining research team members, a minimum percentage of 15% applies (these conditions are automatically verified during the application submission). These restrictions do not apply to CMU-affiliated faculty members and researchers.
- The funding conditions for this call establish 12 months as maximum duration of the grant, eventually extended up to 24 months.
- The recipient entities and the PI must agree to comply with the applicable national and European community norms, namely as regards competition, environment, equal opportunity and gender, and public contracting whenever applicable. In cases of projects involving:
 - Animal experimentation - the PI must vouch for the research team's compliance with EU directives and the relevant Portuguese laws regarding the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes;

- The donation, procurement, testing, processing, storage, distribution, and preservation of human tissues and cells, the PI must vouch for the research team's compliance with EU directives and the relevant Portuguese laws on standards of quality and safety;
- The dissemination strategy for research outputs of the projects, including considerations of open access, shall be taken into account in the evaluation.
- All members of the research team involved in the application must submit their CV in English.
- Funded items (cf. Regulations):
 - Expenses with **Human Resources** dedicated or related to the development of R&D activities related to the project execution in all mandatory components by the applicable labor legislation, including charges with grant holders directly supported by the beneficiaries.
 - Grants within research projects may be of the following types (whose nature is explained in section Glossary and Translations of this guide):
 - BCC – Invited Scientist Grant
 - BPD – Post-doctoral Grant
 - BI – Research Grant
 - BIC – Scientific Initiation Grant
 - BTI – Research Technician Grant

For all grants, the monthly amount to be paid to the grant holder is fixed and established by FCT. The cost considered in each application automatically assumes the authorized monthly cost of the grant, with the number of months fixed by the PI.

- **Missions** (travel, accommodation, registration fees, etc.) in Portugal and abroad;
- **Acquisition of scientific and technical tools and equipment** indispensable to the project if used within the project during their useful lifetime;
- **Amortization of scientific and technical tools and equipment** indispensable to the project and of which the useful lifetime falls within the execution period, but does not end within that period;
- Expenses related to the national and foreign registration of **patents, copyrights, utility models and designs, national models or brands** associated with other forms of intellectual property protection, namely fees, research as to the status of the technique and consulting fees;
- Expenses with the **demonstration, promotion and disclosure of project's outputs**, namely dissemination fees within the fulfillment and pursuant to national policies of open access;
- **Acquisition of goods and services and current expenses** directly related to the execution of the project, including consultants' costs that do not constitute subcontracts;
- **Indirect costs**, with a **flat rate of 25% of eligible costs**, excluding subcontracting and resources provided by third parties.

3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The submitted proposals need to be substantially aligned with the Exploratory Research Projects topics as outlined in section 1 of the [Terms of Reference](#) and this should be a critical evaluation point to the individual and panel evaluation stages.

The evaluation and selection process is based in the following main five review criteria:

- A. Scientific merit and innovative nature of the project, preferably within the scope of the priorities developed by the Atlantic International Research Center ([AIR Center](#)) initiative;
- B. Scientific merit of the research team;
- C. Feasibility of the plan of work and reasonableness of the budget;
- D. Contribution to the body of knowledge and competence of the National Science and Technology System;
- E. Potential economic value of the technology.

Application of these evaluation criteria shall take into account, among other considerations, the following:

- a. For criterion A:
 - i. Relevance and originality of the project proposed (based on the state-of-the-art in a determined scientific area and previous work done by the proposing team);
 - ii. Thematic alignment of the proposal with the Exploratory Research Projects topics as outlined in section 1, giving priority to proposals that contribute to the scientific developments and objectives of the Atlantic International Research Center ([AIR Center](#)) initiative;
 - iii. Adequacy of methodology adopted for carrying out the project;
 - iv. Expected results and their contribution to scientific and technological knowledge;
 - v. Resulting publications and articles;
 - vi. Contribution towards promoting and disseminating science and technology;
 - vii. Production of knowledge that can contribute to benefits to society or to the business sector.
- b. For criterion B:
 - i. Scientific productivity of the team (references to publications and citations in published works, other relevant indicators);
 - ii. Abilities and skills to adequately execute the proposed project (team configuration, PI's qualifications);
 - iii. Ability to involve young researchers in training;
 - iv. Availability of the team and non-duplication of objectives in relation to other projects underway;
 - v. Degree of internationalization of the team;
 - vi. Degree of success in previous projects in relation to the Principal Investigator (PI) (in the case of young PIs, this requirement must be assessed based on the potential revealed by the PI's curriculum vitae in the absence of prior concrete accomplishments);

- vii. Level of commitment of any companies participating in the project (if applicable).
- c. For criterion C:
 - i. Organization of the project in terms of the proposed objectives and resources (duration, equipment, size of the team, institutional and management resources);
 - ii. Institutional resources of the proposing and participating entities (technical-scientific, organizational and managerial and, when appropriate, co-funding capacity on the part of companies).
- d. For criterion D:
 - i. Contribution to the body of knowledge and competence of the National Science and Technology System (expected effects and results).
- e. For criterion E:
 - i. Potential economic value of the technology (if appropriate), namely in terms of its impact on the competitiveness of the national socio-economic system.

4 SCORING SYSTEM

The selection method and ranking of projects is based on the indicator Merit of the Project (Overall Rating), which is determined by the five evaluation criteria described in Section 3.

The Overall Rating of the Project is calculated as:

$$\text{Overall Rating} = 0.6A + 0.1B + 0.1C + 0.05D + 0.15E$$

For the purpose of selection and decision-making regarding funding, projects will be ranked by score obtained in the review process in decreasing order.

The FCT grant application scoring system uses a 9-point scale (1 – minimum; 9 – maximum), and each of the five criteria is rated using this scale with whole numbers only (no decimal ratings).

Reviewers have to identify strengths and weaknesses (if applicable) for each criterion and should provide context for their comments based on the application.

In case of equal ratings, the locking date of the proposals in the FCT's electronic system will be taken into consideration for the raking list.

Under this call, depending on the quality of the proposals, 7 to 10 new awards are expected to be financed.

5 EVALUATION PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

5.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

- Each evaluation panel has a number of members agreed with the FCT Executive Board and the MIT Portugal Program Directors.
- The panel is headed by the Panel Chair.
- All experts will be of acknowledged competence in the scientific areas of the applications to be evaluated, and cannot be affiliated with Portuguese institutions or have current or scheduled collaborations with any Portuguese institution.
- The Panel Chair is identified in the internet FCT, I.P website up to the limit date to submit applications. The remaining panel members are identified after the assessment process conclusion.
- The identification of the remote reviewers will not be made public.
- All panel members have to sign an acknowledgement of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation exercise.
- **Each application** will be remotely and individually evaluated by **two panel members**. One of the panel members will be appointed as the **first reader** for the application.
- Distribution of the applications to panel members will take into consideration any Conflict of Interest, as well as the matching scientific competences.
- Whenever a particular expertise is not covered by the panel members, external reviewers may be invited to provide an assessment of the application in consideration.
- The first time a reviewer logs into the evaluation web page, he/she has to sign a **Confidentiality Statement**.
- Prior to accessing each application, the reviewer has to declare whether or not a conflict of interest is identified for that particular application.
- During the panel meeting, **all** applications shall be discussed. A **ranking list** and a **panel evaluation report** (for each application) will be produced.
- The panel will issue a **panel meeting report** on its activities.
- There is an allocated FCT team for the evaluation panel, which will act as the contact point for the reviewers.

5.2 EVALUATION STAGES

Evaluation of the research applications involves the following stages:

Setting-up Evaluation Panel

- The constitution of the evaluation panel will take into consideration the number of applications, a good gender balance as well as a fair geographic and institutional distribution of evaluators; the involvement of experts from industry, active in research, may also be considered.

- The panel chair will be a regular member of the panel with the added duties of moderating the panel meeting and conveying the results of the discussions to the Board of Directors of FCT. The Panel Chair will have a reduced number of proposals to evaluate.
- The panel members might be asked to give support to FCT during the period spanning from the evaluation meeting to the final decision (e.g, review of eventual preliminary hearings comments presented by the PI).

Pre-Meeting Activities (Individual Reviews)

- Each application will be remotely and individually evaluated by two panel members.
- Both panel members must submit their individual evaluation for each proposal in the Individual Evaluation Form and lock the review.
- Reviewers must submit their assessment for each proposal in the Individual Evaluation Form, including:
 - the rating and comments for each of the five evaluation criteria;
 - a general comment on the application;
 - funding recommendation, without specifying the amount;
 - confidential comments to the evaluation panel, if necessary.
- The assessment should take into account the following **guidelines**:
 - the explanatory comment for each criterion should be succinct but substantial. This comment should address the relative importance of the criterion and the extent to which the application actually meets the criterion;
 - comments should also be impeccably polite. If so decided by the panel, the comments may be reproduced totally or partially in the feedback to applicants;
 - the global explanatory comment for the project should be substantial and fully explain the reviewer's judgment on the application stating recommendations regarding the research work and the project organization;
 - possible modifications to the work plan may be recommended, with proper justification;
 - confidential comments to the evaluation panel may be provided;
 - comments and grades should be in agreement and support each other.
- **Both ratings and comments are critically important.** The individual review ratings and comments are the starting point for the panel discussions and for the panel final rating.
- For each application, one of the panel members will be designated as the **first reader**. Based on the two individual reviews, the first reader will submit and lock a proposal for the **Compilation Report¹ before the panel meeting**.

¹ Consensus Report

Meeting Activities (Panel Evaluation)

- During the panel meeting all applications of the panel and their evaluation reports will be available to all panel members and must be discussed by the panel.
- It is the duty of the **evaluation panel** to:
 - elaborate the **Panel Evaluation** for each application (to be transmitted to the applicants) based on the Compilation Report and panel discussions;
 - generate a **Ranking List** of all evaluated applications;
 - prepare a **Panel Meeting Report** with a summary of the meeting and comments regarding the evaluation process;
 - close the panel.
- The first reader submits the panel assessment (comments to be transmitted to the applicants) in the **Panel Evaluation Form**, including:
 - the rating and the comments for each of the five criteria to be transmitted to the PI;
 - a general comment on the application to be transmitted to the PI;
 - recommended amount for funding to be transmitted to the PI (when the application is recommended for funding);
 - confidential comments to FCT, if necessary.
- The final panel assessment should take into account the following guidelines:
 - All comments including the general comment, should take the form of a statement with respect to the criteria under evaluation and specify the key strengths and weaknesses (if any).
 - Panel Members shall:
 - avoid comments that give a description or a summary of the application;
 - avoid the use of the first person or equivalent: "I think..." or "This reviewer finds...";
 - always use dispassionate and analytical language: avoid dismissive statements about the PI, the proposed science, or the scientific field concerned;
 - avoid asking questions, as the PI will not be able to answer them;
 - evaluate the proposed work as presented and not the work you consider should have been proposed.
- The **Panel Meeting Report**, with a summary of the meeting and comments regarding the evaluation process, should be organized in two main parts:

Part I – Evaluation, including, but not limited to:

 - working methodology adopted by the panel;
 - identification of potential Conflicts of Interest issues and their resolution.

Part II – Confidential Recommendations to FCT, on the various aspects of the evaluation that might help FCT to improve procedures in future calls. Please refer, among other considered important:

- comments and criticism on the application form, with suggestions for possible improvements;
- comments on the material available to the panel members, in particular the guide for Peer Reviewers;
- strong and weak aspects of the evaluation web application;
- strong and weak aspects of the FCT team;
- strong and weak aspects on logistic aspects (travel, hotel, meeting, etc. if applicable).

This report must be signed by all evaluation panel members.

5.3 WEBPAGE FOR INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS

The username and password sent to each individual reviewer gives access through <https://sig.fct.pt/evaluation/> to the list of projects under evaluation by the corresponding reviewer. Please see the Instructions on the top of the menu.

For each project proposal, the following is available:

- A statement on Conflict of Interest;
- All the information submitted in the application form. In this form, the name of each team member has a link to his/her CV and the financed projects by the same PI have a link to the project description and results;
- The information in the application form can be printed and a pdf file can be generated with it. See the links on “Print this page” and “Instructions to view and print this page” for this purpose.
- Different applications by the research team members (even in different scientific areas), for the sake of detecting superposition of objectives or resources;
- The Individual Evaluation and Compilation Report Form;
- Possibility to SAVE the submitted evaluation report. This means that the uploaded information will be kept for future revision;
- The need to LOCK the submitted evaluation report. This means that the reviewer will no longer be able to modify the uploaded information;
- An indication of the work done and yet to be done by the reviewer.

5.4 EVALUATION TIMELINE

The evaluation timeline is established by FCT’s Board of Directors and conveyed to the evaluation panel chair and members. The date of the final meeting of the evaluation panel is established in advance by FCT that carries out all logistic arrangements.

6 CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

6.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

The confidentiality of written proposals must be protected. All reviewers involved in the evaluation are asked not to copy, quote, disclose or otherwise use material contained in the applications. All reviewers are requested to sign a statement of confidentiality relative to the contents of the applications and to the results of the evaluation.

The statement that needs to be accepted, which appears the first time the reviewer uses the individual credentials to access the evaluation area, is the following:

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Thank you for accepting to participate in the scientific evaluation of Research Projects submitted to the Portuguese Foundation of Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.) – FCT.

The reader of this message pledges, on his/her honour, not to quote or using in any way, the contents of the project applications, nor to make available, other than to FCT or the evaluation panel, the results of the evaluation of project applications.

6.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST (COI)

Reviewers that have submitted any **application to the present Call**, either as PI or team member, **have to decline** participating in the evaluation process. Reviewers with first-degree relationships, married to or cohabiting with the PI or any team member are also precluded from being a panel member or remote evaluator.

In the case of a **disqualifying conflict of interest**, those panel members and remote reviewers cannot remotely evaluate the respective applications. Such panel members are also not allowed to participate in the panel meeting discussion of these applications. Circumstances that could be interpreted as a disqualifying conflict of interest are set forth in the following criteria:

1. Life partnership, domestic partnership;
2. Personal interest in the application's success or financial interest by persons listed under no.1;
3. Current or planned close scientific cooperation;
4. Research cooperation within the last three years, e.g., joint publications;
5. Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship (e.g., teacher-student relationship up to and including the postdoctoral phase) within the last five years of the date of the call;
6. The affiliation or pending transfer to any of the institutions involved in the consortium;
7. Researchers who are active in a council or similar supervisory or advisory board of the applying institution are excluded from participating in the review and decision-making process for applications originating from this institution;

In the case of a **potential conflict of interest**, panel members should notify FCT and clarify if he/she is able to perform an unbiased evaluation or if the conflict should rather be considered as disqualifying. A potential conflict of interest exists in the following circumstances:

8. Relationships that do not fall under no. 1; other personal ties or conflicts;
9. Financial interests of persons listed under no. 8;
10. Participation in university bodies other than those listed under no. 7, e.g., in scientific advisory committees in the research environment;
11. Preparation of an application or implementation of a project with a closely related research topic (competition);
12. Participating in an on-going scientific or inter-personal conflict with the applicant(s).

Before starting the evaluation of each application, and in order to be able to access the evaluation form, the individual reviewer needs to complete the Col Declaration, as follows:

Conflict of Interest Declaration

Please state:

- No, I have no conflict
- Yes, I have a strong conflict (see **Disqualifying Col**)
- It is possible that I have a conflict (see **Potential Col**)

Add any comments below.

The **individual reviewer** will not be able to proceed in the presence of a strong conflict of interest. **In this case the individual reviewer is required to inform the FCT team of the situation**, so that the application may be reassigned. The final panel report must mention all declared Col.

7 GLOSSARY AND TRANSLATIONS

7.1 PORTUGUESE TRANSLATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Agregação = Aggregation. This is an academic title. It attests

- i. the quality of the academic, professional, scientific and pedagogical curriculum,
- ii. the capacity to carry out research work,
- iii. the capability to coordinate and carry out independent research work,

and is issued to PhD holders after a public exam by a jury. The exam is required by the candidates and takes places during two days.

Doutoramento = PhD, doctoral degree

Mestrado = Master's degree

Licenciatura = BA (3, 4 or 5 years graduate course)

Bolsa = Grant, fellowship

Bolseiro = Grant Holder, Fellow

BCC = Bolsa de Cientista Convidado = Invited Scientist Grant

- Invited scientist grants are designed for doctoral degree holders with scientific curricula of notable merit, for the purpose of developing and carrying out research activities in Portuguese science and technology institutions, including directing and coordinating of research projects.
- The total duration of this type of grant can vary between one month and three years.

BPD = Bolsa de Pós-Doutoramento = Post-doctoral Grant

- Post-doctoral grants are intended for individuals who have already completed a doctoral degree, preferably within the last five years, for the purpose of carrying out advanced research in Portuguese or foreign scientific institutes of recognized merit.

BI = Bolsa de Investigação = Research Grant

- These research grants are available for graduation or master degree holders for the purpose of obtaining scientific training in research projects or in Portuguese science and technology institutions.
- These grants are, in principle, one year in length, renewable for up to a total of three years, and cannot be awarded for periods of less than three consecutive months.

BIC = Bolsa de Iniciação Científica = Scientific Initiation Grant

- Scientific initiation grants are designed primarily for students who have completed at least 3 years of higher education (1st cycle or equivalent) for the purpose of obtaining scientific training by participating in research projects in Portuguese institutions.
- These grants are, in principle, one year in length, renewal for up to two years, contingent on good scholastic performance. They cannot be awarded for periods of less than three consecutive months.

BTI = Bolsa de Técnico de Investigação = Research Technician Grant

- Research technician grants are designed to provide for additional specialized training of technicians to support the operation and maintenance of scientific laboratory equipment and infrastructures and other activities relevant to the Portuguese scientific and technological system.
- The length of this type of grant varies, up to a total of five years, and cannot be awarded for periods of less than three consecutive months.

NUTS = Nomenclaturas de Unidades Territoriais para fins Estatísticos – Denomination of the Territorial Units for Statistical purposes

7.2 GLOSSARY

Associate Laboratory = Private not-for profit and public research institutions together with State Laboratories can join in an association, named Associate Laboratory, aiming at the achievement of special objectives of the national science and technological policy. The status of Associate Laboratory is granted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, for periods not exceeding 10 years, upon recognition of their Excellence.

Autonomous Regions = Madeira and Azores Islands

FEDER = European Regional Development Fund

FTE = Full Time Equivalent

MCTES = Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education

Postdoctoral Fellow = a PhD holder that has a Post-doctoral grant