

**ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE  
2019 CALL FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS  
UNDER THE UT AUSTIN PORTUGAL PROGRAM**

Under article number 10 of the Regulation for Projects Exclusively funded by National Funds, hereinafter designed by [FCT Projects Regulations](#), published in Regulation N.º 999/2016, of October 31<sup>st</sup>, the Scientific Research and Technological Development Projects are submitted under a call for proposals with terms disseminated at the website of the *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P.* (FCT) ([www.fct.pt](http://www.fct.pt)).

This Announcement for the Call for Proposals, hereinafter referred to as ACP, has been developed in accordance with the provisions of Article 11 of the abovementioned regulation, and reads as follows:

**1. AIMS AND PRIORITIES**

The Exploratory Research Projects (ERP) call is designed to assist teams of researchers from non-corporate entities of the National Scientific and Technology System (NSTS) and The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), alongside industry partners, by bootstrapping high-impact potential research activities of strategic relevance for the UT Austin Portugal Program. The projects must aim at stimulating and promoting Portugal's international competitiveness and innovation capacity in Science and Technology (S&T) in the scientific areas addressed by the present call, with a focus on the opportunities provided by the data economy as a driver of growth and change.

The proposals must configure groundbreaking, high-risk/high-reward projects, and show promise and a strategy for significant future expansion of the project's goals. Although ERPs are not expected to achieve, during their execution timeline, the fully developed and ambitious results that are typical of longer-term projects, proposals must be very concrete on the activities and outcomes that the consortium actually proposes to carry out and achieve within the scope of the ERP, and clearly link them to longer-term objectives. The ERP should value impact, i.e., propose potential solutions to real-world problems, going beyond the production of research papers.

The research areas addressed by this Call are:

- **Advanced Computing** (High Performance Computing, High Throughput Computing and Quantum Computing);
- **Medical Physics for Emerging Cancer Therapies;**
- **Nano Materials for New Markets;**
- **Space-Earth Interactions.**

A detailed description of the challenges and subtopics covered by each research area is provided in the [Terms of Reference](#) of the present Call.

Projects proposed, in particular, those addressing the [Space-Earth Interactions](#) area, should, desirably, demonstrate their contribution to the Atlantic International Research Center's scientific agenda (AIR Center), as laid down in the document "Towards a Science and Technology agenda for an integrative approach to the Atlantic: Climate Change and Energy Systems, Space and Ocean Sciences, through North-South cooperation", available at FCT's website ([https://www.fct.pt/media/conferencias/docs/AIRCenter\\_whitepaper.pdf](https://www.fct.pt/media/conferencias/docs/AIRCenter_whitepaper.pdf)).

In addition, proposals related to the topic [Advanced Computing](#), desirably, should foster synergies with the Minho Advanced Computing Center (MACC).

All proposals must comply entirely with the indications given in the [Terms of Reference for the ERPs Call for Proposals 2019](#).

## 2. SUPPORTED ENTITIES

Only the following Portuguese entities are eligible to receive funding from FCT through the present Call for Proposals:

- Higher Education Institutions, their institutes and R&D units;
- State or International Laboratories with head office in Portugal;
- Non-profit private institutions whose main objective is R&D activities;
- Other non-profit private and public institutions developing or participating in scientific research activities.

The UT Austin counterpart of the Program will fund the participating researchers at UT Austin.

## 3. CRITERIA FOR SUPPORTING PROJECTS

This call will fund proposals for research and development projects of exploratory nature developed by entities of the National Scientific and Technology System (NSTS), defined in section 2 of this ACP.

This ACP will grant a non-reimbursable funding in accordance with Article 7 of the [FCT Project Regulation](#).

The submitted proposals must include:

- One or more Portuguese research institutions from different entities as identified in section 2;
- At least, one partner at UT Austin (or at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for the applications on the area of Medical Physics, if applicable).

In addition to the entities mentioned above, consortia are allowed to include other public or private entities, profit or non-profit, that may also invest in the exploratory project and bring relevant competencies to the project. However, those entities will not be eligible for funding by this call.

This call will fund only resources and activities in Portuguese beneficiaries.

The maximum duration of a project is 12 months, extendable for a maximum of 3 months in duly justified cases. At the end of each exploratory project, a final report must be submitted according to Article 24 of the [FCT Project Regulation](#).

#### **4. INDICATIVE FUNDING FCT**

The National funds, through FCT, I.P. budget, will fund the projects.

The total funding available for Portuguese research institutions under this call will be up to € 400,000 (four-hundred thousand euros), to ERPs starting in 2020. An awarded project may be granted up to € 50,000 (fifty thousand euros) to fund the research work carried out by the Portuguese team.

Considering the maximum amount of eligible funding per project, the Program expects to support 8 exploratory research projects through this call. However, the actual number of exploratory projects funded will depend on the quality of the submitted proposals.

An advance payment of 75% of the funding approved for the financed projects will be made by FCT, I.P. after the Acceptance Documents return.

The remaining amount, until the approved funding, will be paid after the scientific and financial components of the project are closed and by means of a final refund payment.

The expenditure justification should be made via electronic submission of only payment request, in a specific form provided through the FCT, I.P internet Portal.

The UT Austin Portugal Program will fund independently the participating researchers at UT Austin, at a level similar to that of the research team in Portugal.

#### **5. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

Considering the provisions of Article 8 of the [FCT Projects Regulation](#), the following expenses are eligible:

##### **a) Direct Costs for Portuguese institutions:**

- **Human resources** dedicated or related to the development of R&D activities with regard to the project's execution in all mandatory components by the applicable labour legislation, including expenses with grant holders and working contracts directly supported by the beneficiaries.

With regard to employment contracts, human resources expenses are based on the costs incurred in carrying out the project, based on the monthly base salary declared for the social protection of the worker, which may be increased by the mandatory social food allowance and occupational accident insurance under legally defined terms. The basic salary shall be the set of all remunerations of a permanent nature subject to taxation and declared for the purpose of social protection of the worker.

The Research Fellowships are tendered and contracted by the beneficiary entities in the context of the supported projects, which must comply with the [FCT Regulation for Research Studentships and Fellowships \(Law n.º 40/2004 of 18 August, in its present version\)](#);

- **Missions** (travel, accommodation, registration fees, etc.) in Portugal and abroad, and directly attributable to the project;
- **Acquisition of scientific and technical tools and equipment**, indispensable to the project if within the project during their useful lifetime;
- **Amortization of technical and scientific 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;
- **Subcontracts** directly related to the project scientific task's execution;
- Expenses related to the national and international record of **patents, copyrights, utility models and designs, national models or trademarks** when associated with other forms of intellectual protection, namely fees, state-of-the-art searches and consulting expenses;
- Expenses with the **demonstration, promotion and disclosure of project's outputs**, such as publication fees in order to meet the national policies for the Open Access, including activities to promote the scientific culture and exhibitions;
- **Acquisition of other goods and services** directly related to the project execution, including costs with **consultants** that do not establish subcontracts.

**b) Indirect Costs for Portuguese institutions**, with a fixed rate of 25% of direct eligible costs with exclusion of subcontracting.

Non-eligible expenses for Portuguese institutions under the Exploratory Research call are indicated in Article 9 of the [FCT Projects Regulation](#).

## 6. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be presented to FCT, in English, from **6 November to 8 January 2020, at 17:00 Lisbon time**, using a specific on-line form and should be submitted through the FCT platform (<https://concursos.fct.pt/projectos/>), following the Announcement of the Call for Projects. Applications to this call must include the on-line FCT form and the following documents, also submitted electronically:

- "Technical Annex" (according to [section 5 of the Terms of Reference for 2019 Call for ERPs](#));
- The document that certifies the PhD degree of the Lead Principal Investigator (PI) at Portugal;
- Written agreement between the Lead PI at Portugal and the Proposing Institution (if applicable);
- A statement from the PI at UT Austin (or at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for the applications on the area of Medical Physics, if applicable), confirming that he/she will be the PI from UT Austin and that he/she holds a tenured-track faculty appointment at UT Austin; In the case of proposals in the area of Advanced Computing led by PIs at the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC), the statement must indicate the PI is a full-time senior researcher with PI status;

- Declaration on the regulatory framework for State Aid - non-corporate entities of the R&I System;
- Timeline file of projects.

Scanning of the Declaration of Commitment of each application must be submitted on the FCT platform by **22 January, 2020**.

Before submitting a proposal, applicants are advised to read the Regulations mentioned in section 9 of this announcement, namely, the [Guidelines for Exploratory Research Projects Proposals Writing](#); the [Terms of Reference for the Exploratory Research Projects Call for Proposals 2019](#), and the [FCT Projects Regulation](#).

## 7. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 7.1. The Lead Principal Investigator in Portugal:

- May be identified as PI in only one proposal in this call;
- Should have a doctoral degree. The document certifying the doctoral degree should be attached to the application;
- Should have an employment contract or grant contract with the Principal Contractor. In the absence of such a link, a written agreement between the parties must be submitted attached to the application, according to point c) of item 1 of article 6 of [FCT Projects Regulation](#);
- Identify a co-responsible for the project, the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), that will replace the PI when he/she is unable to fulfil his/her duties;
- Proposals will not be accepted from lead Portugal PIs affiliated with institutions on a situation of unjustified fault with FCT requirements regarding the delivery of scientific and/or financial execution reports from previous financed projects;
- Proposals will also not be accepted from lead Portugal PIs who were PI of any project with a final scientific report rejected within two years before the opening of the Call, for reasons attributable to them.

### 7.2. Members of the Research team

The remaining members of the Portugal research team shall be dedicated to the project, according to their participation.

### 7.3. UT Austin Team

The proposal must be led by a tenured or tenured-track faculty member, who will be responsible for the project in Austin. A confirmation statement should be attached to the application.

In the area of Medical Physics, faculty at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center may also participate and/or lead projects. In the area of Advanced Computing, full-time senior researchers from the TACC may also lead projects.

### 7.4. Principal contractor

The principal contractor of the project should be one of the national entities of the R&D system mentioned on point 2 of this ACP.

Applications to projects of which the Principal Contractors are in unjustified default related to the refund of loans transferred to the said Principal Contractor related to previous projects with the same Principal Investigator are not accepted.

## 8. SELECTION METHODOLOGY

An international panel of independent reviewers will carry out the evaluation. The selection method and ranking of projects are based on the Project Merit Indicator using criteria which are described in greater detail in the [Guide for Peer Reviewers – UT Austin Portugal: Call for Exploratory Projects](#) and at the [Terms of Reference](#) for the 2019 Call for Exploratory Projects UT Austin Portugal.

The evaluation process will be based on the following criteria:

- A. Scientific merit and innovative nature of the project from an international standpoint, and alignment with the goals of the UT Austin Portugal Program;
- B. Scientific merit of the research team;
- C. Feasibility of the plan of work program and reasonableness of the resources and budget;
- D. Potential social and economic impact of the research work;

The **Merit of the Project** (MP) is calculated according with the following formula:

$$\mathbf{MP= 0.40 A + 0.20 B + 0.20 C + 0.20 D}$$

Each criterion is scored using a 9-point scale system (1 – minimum; 9 – maximum) and rated using this scale with whole numbers only (decimal ratings are not allowed). The final score of MP is rounded to a single decimal place. If information made available in the application does not allow for evaluating a given criterion, then the respective criterion will receive a score of 1 (one). For a proposal to be eligible for funding, the following minimum score is required:

- MP = 5.0 points.

For the purpose of selection and decision-making regarding funding, projects will be ranked by score obtained in the review process in decreasing order. In case of equal ratings, the locking date of the proposals in the FCT's electronic system will be taken into consideration for the ranking list.

## 9. PUBLICATION AND COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

This Announcement and other relevant materials and information, in particular the [Regulations for Projects Exclusively Funded by National Funds](#), are available at [FCT's website](#).

For inquires of a scientific nature, please contact the UT Austin Portugal program at [leadership@utaustinportugal.org](mailto:leadership@utaustinportugal.org).

For specific information related to the application submission, please contact [concursoprojetos@fct.pt](mailto:concursoprojetos@fct.pt).

Helena Pereira

President, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia