

Assessment Guide

Call for application to the Pepe Fellowship
Grant – 1st edition



Health Research Network
From the Lab to the Community

Introduction

The Evaluation Guide is a document that aims to help evaluators and candidates understand the criteria and procedures inherent in the evaluation of applications submitted to the Pepe Fellowship Grant – 1st Edition.

1. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The applications considered eligible will be scored from zero (0.00 minimum rating) to five (5.00 maximum rating) in each of the three evaluation criteria:

Criterion A – Candidate’s Merit;

Criterion B – Merit of the Work Plan;

Criterion C – Merit of the Hosting Conditions.

Candidates will be ranked according to the weighted average of the classification obtained in each of the three criteria, with a weight of **30%** for the Candidate's Merit (A), **40%** for the Merit of the Work Plan (B), and **30%** for the Merit of Hosting Conditions (C), translated by the following formula:

$$\text{Final Score} = (0,3 \times A) + (0,4 \times B) + (0,3 \times C)$$

For **tie-breaking purposes**, the ranking of candidates will be based on the ratings assigned to each of the evaluation criteria in the following order of precedence:

1. Criterion B (Merit of the Work Plan), Criterion A (Merit of the Candidate), and Criterion C (Merit of the Hosting Conditions).

The final classification resulting from the application of the weights specified in this document will be rounded to the third decimal place using the following rule: when the fourth decimal place is equal to or greater than 5 (five), it will be rounded up; when the fourth decimal place is less than 5 (five), the value of the third decimal place will be maintained.

1.1 Criterion A – Candidate’s Merit

1.1.1 Sub-criterion A1 – Academic Path

The score for this sub-criterion is calculated based on **academic achievements in the certificates of academic degrees presented by the candidate in the application form.**

Although the submission of qualification certificates does not constitute an admissibility requirement, **documentary proof of the grades obtained in academic degrees is mandatory to assess sub-criterion A1.**

In the event that no valid degree certificates are submitted, the classification to be assigned to sub-criterion A1 will be zero (A1 = 0).

1.1.1.1 Mandatory presentation documents

To apply the scores predicted in A1, the candidate must submit the following documents in the application:

a) **Certificate of academic degrees**, specifically identifying the final classification. In “post-Bologna” training, you must present the 1st and 2nd cycle certificates or, if it is not a two-stage training, the integrated master's certificate. In “pre-Bologna” training, you must present your bachelor’s and master’s certificates.

b) In the case of **academic degrees awarded by foreign higher education institutions, it is mandatory to present the recognition** of these degrees and the **conversion of the respective final classification** to the Portuguese classification scale to guarantee the application of the principle of equal treatment to candidates who hold degrees foreign and national academics.

The recognition of foreign academic degrees and diplomas and the conversion of the final classification to the Portuguese classification scale can be requested at an HEI or DGES. A consult to the DGES portal is suggested to obtain information about this procedure: <http://www.dges.gov.pt>.

1.1.2 Sub-criterion A2 – Personal CV

When assessing sub-criterion A2, the evaluators analyze the candidate's curriculum in an integrated manner, considering the merits of their academic, scientific, professional, and civic path by what is exposed by the candidate in their CV (information available at CIÊNCIAVITAE and synopsis of the CV). In this analysis, the evaluators also consider the academic results that were not included in the calculation of sub-criterion A1 – Academic Path and the various dimensions of the curriculum that may demonstrate a relevant personal, scientific, and professional path.

When evaluating this sub-criterion, the **motivation letter** is also considered, namely the clarity with which the candidate identifies the reasons underlying their candidacy, including the framing of the work plan within the candidate's career development objectives and personal ambitions, and the

interest in the studies to be carried out. If applicable, the candidate's perspective on the vision of the social return of their work is also considered, including the expected scientific progress, the potential for wealth creation, and knowledge transfer. The basis for choosing the most representative document submitted is also evaluated.

In the case of the **most representative document**, the choice of which must be justified by the candidate in the motivation letter, the panel evaluates its scientific quality and relevance within the scope of the submitted work plan.

The classification given in this sub-criterion must reflect a global and integrated view of the candidate's CV.

1.1.3 Disability bonus

Candidates who present a degree of disability equal to or greater than 90% will have a 20% bonus in Criterion A – Candidate Merit.

Candidates who present a degree of disability equal to or greater than 60% and less than 90% will have a 10% bonus on the same criteria.

The degree of incapacity **must be** proven through the presentation, in the application, of the “**Atestado Médico de Incapacidade Multiuso**” (AMIM), issued under the terms of Decree-Law no. 202/96, of October 23, in the current wording.

1.2 Criterion B – Merit of the Work Plan

The Merit of the Work Plan, a criterion weighing 40%, is evaluated in an integrated and transversal manner, assessing the quality, originality, and relevance of the work plan in the dimensions that constitute the following three sub-criteria:

B1 – Relevance of the object of study; B2 – Scientific quality of the state-of-the-art and methodology of the work plan; B3 – Feasibility of the work plan.

When evaluating **sub-criterion B1**, the precise definition of research objectives and questions is valued, as well as the originality and potential contribution of the research project to knowledge and the advancement of science and technology.

When evaluating **sub-criterion B2**, the quality of the state of the art presented and the proposed research methodology are considered, also considering its clarity, consistency, and coherence, in accordance with internationally accepted standards, as well as the originality of the work plan to be carried out.

In the evaluation of **sub-criterion B3**, the adequacy of the methodologies to the tasks and objectives foreseen in the work plan is valued depending on the number of months indicated for their completion, as well as the total time expected for the completion of the project. The timetable should also indicate the period foreseen for submitting the thesis at the university or the work leading to obtaining a doctorate degree. If applicable, the analysis of the risks inherent to the various phases that constitute it is also assessed, possibly with the preliminary identification of the most critical points and the corresponding contingency measures to be adopted.

When evaluating this sub-criterion, the presentation of the **schedule, which is mandatory**, is also valued, the detail of which must be sufficient so that the panel can assess the sequence of tasks within the expected time, allowing the feasibility of the proposed work plan to be evaluated.

In addition, in this section, the candidate should clearly describe how the fellowship grant money will be used. No mandatory budget items exist, but a budget outline and justification are highly recommended.

Whenever the work plan's theme, methodology, and results involve **ethical issues**, these must be clearly identified and justified (in the respective field of the form), explaining how they will be addressed.

1.3 Criterion C – Merit of Hosting Conditions

The merit of the hosting conditions, a criterion weighing 30%, is assessed based on two sub-criteria:

C1 – The scientific merit and experience of the supervisor(s) in the scientific area of the application, as well as their suitability for supervising the candidate to obtain the academic degree of doctor;

C2 – Demonstration, made by the candidate, of the reasons for choosing the guidance team and the host institution(s), as well as their suitability for the work plan.

The evaluation of these sub-criteria is carried out in an integrated manner, considering:

1. The CV associated by the supervisor(s), based on the information submitted during the application (**CIÊNCIA VITAE curriculum** or PDF), which must explicitly include the connection to the host entities;
2. The demonstration made by the candidate in the respective field of the application form, the suitability and complementarity of the guidance team and host institution(s), to guarantee the successful implementation of the proposed work plan;
3. The resources provided by the host institution(s) that are mentioned throughout the application.

2. EVALUATION PROCESS

2.1 Guiding Principles of the Evaluation

In this Call, RISE coordination team is responsible for ensuring the scientific quality of the evaluation process. The application's content is the object of evaluation, requiring an integrated and global view of all components of the candidate's academic, scientific, professional, and civic career, as well as the research work plan and the conditions for carrying it out. The application must be evaluated considering its originality, consistency, coherence, and contribution to advancing knowledge in all its aspects. Evaluators must value the quality and originality of applications, avoiding a merely quantitative assessment of the candidate and supervisor(s) CVs. A pivotal evaluation factor regards the interrelation of the proposed work with RISE Thematic Lines (TL). In this respect, all applications should identify at least two TLs and present a sustained justification on how the project relates to the core scientific field of the selected TL.

The impartiality and objectivity of the evaluators, as well as the transparency of the evaluation process, are fundamental principles for the assessment of the merit of each application, regardless of the origin or identity of the candidate, supervisors, and host institutions, also safeguarding any situations of conflict of interest (CoI).

2.2 Conflict of Interest

If the coordination team or any other member of the evaluation panels is in a situation of CoI in relation to any of the applications submitted to the panel, they must declare it to RISE as soon as they have the first contact with the application.

Panel members in Col situations cannot be appointed by the coordination as evaluators of the respective application. They are prevented from contacting either the application or the evaluations produced on it throughout the entire evaluation process.

Col statements must be included in the panel meeting minutes. In collaboration with RISE, the evaluation panel coordinator is responsible for ensuring the inclusion of this list, which must include the reference and the name of the candidate and the panel member in a Col situation.

The Col situations of the coordinator, co-coordinator, evaluators, and external experts include, but are not limited to:

1. Belong to the **same academic or non-academic organizational unit and/or to the same research unit** of the **host institution(s)** of the work plan presented in the application;
2. Belong to the **same academic or non-academic organizational unit and/or to the same research unit** affiliation **of the supervisor(s)** associated with the application;
3. Belong to the **scientific committee of the Doctoral Program** indicated in the application;
4. Have published scientific works with the candidate or with the candidate's supervisor(s) in the **three years prior** to the opening date of the application period;
5. Have been part of the same team on a scientific project with the candidate or supervisor(s) in the **three years prior** to the opening date of the application period;
6. Have an ongoing **scientific collaboration with the candidate or their supervisor(s)**;
7. Have a **family relationship** with the candidate or their supervisor(s);
8. Having a **scientific or personal conflict** with the candidate or their supervisor(s);
9. Being in **any other situation that may raise doubts** for them or third parties, either the candidate or an outside entity, regarding the ability to assess the candidacy impartially.

2.3 Terms of Reference and Confidentiality

All panel members, including evaluators, coordinator, and co-coordinator, as well as any external experts who, although not part of the panel, may be consulted to support it, establish with RISE the commitment to respect a set of essential responsibilities to the process of assessment, such as the duties of **impartiality, declaration of any potential situations of conflict of interest and confidentiality**. Confidentiality must be fully protected and ensured at all times of the evaluation process in order to guarantee the independence of all opinions produced. All panel members, as well as external experts, are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of the entire evaluation process

and the content of applications, being prohibited from copying, quoting, or using any material contained therein.

2.4 Constitution of Evaluation Panels

The evaluation panels are integrated by experts of recognized experience and scientific merit, recruited from the RISE's Advisory Committee and the experts suggested by those members. In setting up the evaluation panels, whenever possible, criteria are followed to cover scientific areas and subareas, gender balance, and geographic and institutional diversity.

Panel members, including the coordinator, co-coordinator, and external experts who may eventually produce opinions for the panel, **cannot form part of the guidance team for candidates** with applications submitted to the evaluation panel in which they participate.

The evaluation work carried out by each panel is managed by the panel coordinator, whose appointment is made by invitation from the coordinator of RISE. The panel coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the evaluation exercise is carried out with **transparency, independence, and equity**.

The coordinator will be able to evaluate a reduced number of applications to overcome specific situations of lack of scientific coverage in the panel or Col of the remaining panel members.

The coordinator must designate, from among the members of the respective panel, one or two co-coordinators (depending on the panel size) to support him in coordination tasks, namely in the management of applications with which he declared Col. The evaluator designated as co-coordinator will combine his respective functions with those of the evaluator of the applications assigned to him.

Applications are assigned to the panel members according to the combination of the main RISE Thematic Line and the secondary Thematic Line selected by the candidate.

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities of Panel Coordination

The coordinator, in collaboration with the RISE Executive Committee, is responsible for:

1. Ensure that the evaluation exercise is carried out with transparency, independence and equity;
2. Appoint a co-coordinator to support him in managing the panel, delegating to him the tasks considered necessary for the proper management of the works;

3. Allocate each application to two evaluators, in collaboration with the co-coordinator, nominating them as 1st and 2nd evaluators, considering the main and secondary Thematic Lines, respectively, as well as the CoI situations declared by the panel members;
4. Identify applications that require evaluation by experts external to the RISE Advisory Committee;
5. Manage the identified CoIs;
6. Ensure that all panel members follow the guidelines and clarifications provided by the RISE Executive Committee throughout the process, as well as the assessment harmonization parameters that the panel may establish;
7. Verify, in a joint action with the members of the panel, the adequacy of the candidacies to the panel, identifying candidacies outside the scope of the panel, susceptible of being considered, eventually, as “Not eligible”;
8. Ensure that all panel members know and apply equally the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria established and harmonized by the panel, as well as their respective weightings;
9. Ensure compliance with the deadlines established for preparing reports in each of the stages of the remote assessment phase, namely, in the individual and pre-consensus stages;
10. Confirm that the classifications assigned are justified in the evaluation reports with substantive and clear arguments, which allow understanding of the correspondence between them;
11. Moderate the evaluation panel meeting and ensure a collegial decision-making process;
12. Ensure that the final evaluation report is prepared during the plenary meeting;
13. Ensure that the final evaluation reports produced by the panel, which will be transmitted to the candidates, are consistent and coherent with each other, demonstrate the relative merit of the applications, and guarantee that the comments presented are in accordance with the established in this guide, in the notice of the opening of the call, in the applicable legislation and with the classifications attributed;
14. Drawing up the minutes of the meeting together with the other members of the evaluation panel;
15. Collaborate with the RISE Executive Committee in resolving any unforeseen events that may occur before, during, or after the evaluation panel meeting;

2.6 Remote and Plenary Evaluation

2.6.1 Remote Evaluation Phase

Before starting the application evaluation process, all panel members (including the coordinator and co-coordinator) must indicate which applications they have a conflict of interest with, thus preventing access to their details. The list of declared CoIs will be included in the minutes of the plenary evaluation meeting, which will be made available to candidates.

The remote assessment phase is divided into two stages: i) individual assessment and ii) pre-consensus assessment. In the first stage, each evaluator completes their individual evaluation reports. In the second stage, the 1st evaluator is responsible for producing the respective pre-consensus reports that must reflect the harmonized considerations of both evaluators allocated to each application.

2.6.1.1 Individual Assessment

1. Each application is assessed individually by two-panel members who are not in a Col situation, either with the candidate or with their supervisor(s) and host institution(s).
2. If evaluators identify an additional Col situation concerning any applications assigned to them, they must immediately and formally declare it to the RISE Executive Committee and the panel coordinator responsible for reallocating the application(s).
3. **Whenever justified**, the coordinator should, during the individual remote evaluation period, **request the opinion of external experts**, considering the transdisciplinarity or specific aspects of the proposal and institutional collaborations described in the application.
4. An application will be considered **non-eligible** when **it deviates substantially from the Thematic Lines in which it was submitted**. Applications under these circumstances must be immediately reported to the RISE Executive Committee by the coordinator and/or evaluators who identify the situation. Before considering an application as non-eligible, the evaluation panel should analyze the framing of the main theme of the work plan to the scientific subarea selected by the candidate and consult external experts, specialists in the subject of application. This decision must be duly substantiated in the final assessment report and indicated in the minutes.
5. An application will also be considered **non-eligible** when it is identified **that at least one of the mandatory admissibility requirements of the candidate or application still needs to be fulfilled**.

2.6.1.2 Pre-Consensus Assessment

At the end of the individual evaluation period, the 1st evaluator is responsible for preparing the pre-consensus report within the pre-established period, which takes place before the panel meeting.

The pre-consensus reports must reflect the harmonization of the individual reports prepared by the two evaluators, also considering the opinion of the external expert whenever this has been used.

2.6.2 Plenary Evaluation

The plenary evaluation phase consists of a meeting with the presence of all panel members and **moderated by the coordinator, where a collegial discussion of all applications submitted to the panel** is promoted. This meeting comprises the following moments:

1. Analysis and collective discussion of all applications, taking into account the individual evaluation and pre-consensus reports previously produced and which constitute working documents for the panel;
2. At the meeting, the 1st evaluators must be prepared to present, in summary form, the added value and possible weaknesses of the applications attributed to them. The coordinator is responsible for promoting the debate and encouraging the participation of all panel members in the discussion of the applications;
3. The final evaluation of the applications from each panel is promoted through the discussion of their relative merit, thus establishing the final classification of each one. Panel members in a situation of conflict of interest will not be able to participate in or witness the discussion of their respective candidacy. In the case of applications in which the coordinator and co-coordinator declared Col situations, one member will be appointed from among the remaining members of the panel without conflict of interest to replace them and moderate the discussion of these applications;
4. The preparation of the final evaluation reports is the responsibility of the 1st evaluator and must reflect the collegial decision of the panel;
5. All final evaluation reports produced must be consistent and coherent with each other, and there must be a correspondence between the assigned classifications and the comments that support them;
6. All panel members are responsible for discussing the relative merits of all applications. The collegiate discussion will result in a single provisional list of candidates by panel.

2.7 Comments to Transmit to Candidates

Each assessment report must consider the need to present, in a clear, coherent, and consistent way, the arguments that led to the classifications attributed **to each of the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria**; the explanation of any disability bonus, according to its respective degree, must also be indicated. It is the responsibility of the coordinator and co-coordinator to ensure that the final evaluation reports justify the classifications with substantive arguments that allow an understanding of the meaning of the evaluation, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each application for each evaluation criterion.

In the comments contained in the final evaluation reports, the evaluation panel should also follow the following recommendations:

1. Do not use the first person singular; alternatively, and as an example, use “The panel considers that (...)”;
2. Avoid descriptive comments or comments that are just a summary of elements contained in the application;
3. Avoid generic and/or vague comments, such as “very weak work plan”, “adequate CV”, “excellent reception conditions”, etc.;
4. Use analytical and impartial language, avoiding derogatory comments regarding the candidate, the proposed work plan, the supervisors, etc.;
5. Avoid asking questions, as the candidate will be unable to answer.

2.8. Minutes of the Assessment Panel Meeting

The minutes of the evaluation panel meeting are the responsibility of all panel members, with their preparation being the responsibility of the coordinator, who is delegated the role of representing the entire panel.

The minutes must include:

1. Name and affiliation of all members of the evaluation panel;
2. Indication of the existence of applications considered non-eligible;
3. Methodology adopted by the panel for cases considered particular;
4. Provisional list of classification and ranking of candidates, in descending order of the final classification, of all applications evaluated by the panel;
5. List of CoI declared by all panel members.