

FSR Incoming Post-doc Fellowships

GUIDE FOR APPLICANT 2024

This “Guide” is intended as a support document to help applicants correctly fill in the “Application form 2024” and submit a complete proposal.

It is necessary **to read carefully the entire document** before submitting a research project.

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The form must be **typed** and sent as **one single PDF file** by email;
- Applications (**maximum 1 proposal per supervisor**) must be submitted electronically to the UCLouvain Research Department (crec-adre@uclouvain.be) by **October 1st, 2023 at 9 am** (Brussels time) at the latest.
- The file has to be filled **in English** in order to facilitate the evaluation by international experts. Exceptions are possible according to the research topic but **must be duly justified** (written request addressed to the President of the UCLouvain Research Council prior to the application submission).

Files that are incomplete, submitted after deadline or those not meeting eligibility criteria might be considered ineligible and rejected before evaluation

Program Manager:
UCLouvain Research Department
Sara.wilmet@uclouvain.be
Tel: +32 10 47 38 36

1. Aim of the action

The program, which is targeted at incoming researchers, aims at reinforcing the international dimension of the host institution by supporting highly-qualified post-docs from abroad. The ultimate ambition is to build scientific and technological (S&T) collaborations and long-lasting networks between the respective research fields.

The fellowships are assigned to researchers holding a PhD degree, proving their expertise and research capacity by a personal scientific record.

2. Eligible scientists

Applicants to a FSR Incoming post-doc Fellowship must:

- Hold a **doctoral degree** (PhD), obtained after defense of a thesis, issued by an academic institution no later than May 1st, 2024.
- At the reference date of February 5th, 2024, the candidate may not have obtained his/her doctoral degree for more than 5 years.

The maximum period laid down in the above paragraph shall be increased by one year per childbirth and / or adoption following the award of the PhD academic degree.

- Be **in mobility condition**, i.e. not having resided nor carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than **24 months** in the 3 years immediately prior to the starting date of the project¹.

All nationalities are eligible.

3. Duration of the stay

The stay should cover periods of 12 up to 36 months. The project will start maximum 12 months after the call deadline. The FSR grant can only be awarded if the stay takes place in Belgium.

4. Research fields and potential host units

The research stay must take place in the frame of the ongoing research activities taking place in a research unit of Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Brussels, Tournai, Mons, Charleroi and Namur): www.uclouvain.be;

The program is based on a bottom-up approach as all research fields are eligible (Sciences and Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Health Sciences).

5. Submission of applications

The application will be submitted in electronic copy **by the applicant/researcher** who will have been in contact with a supervisor in the host institution (the name of the supervisor must be identified in point 17 of the application form). The list of all research entities and supervisors is available on UCLouvain's website (see point 4).

¹ At the starting date of the project (maximum 12 months after the call deadline), if the researcher is already beneficiary of a fellowship in the host institution for 12 months or more, the duration of the FSR fellowship will be adapted in such a way to respect the rule of max. 36 months under fellowship.

The application form will be introduced to the following e-mail address: crec-adre@uclouvain.be by **October 1st, 2023 at 9 am** (Brussels time) at the latest.

The “Application form 2024” will have to be accompanied by:

- A curriculum vitae (Europass template : www.europa.eu/europass/en/create-europass-cv);
- A narrative curriculum vitae (max. 1 double-sides A4 sheet);
- A list of scientific publications of the applicant;
- A description of the research project to be performed during the stay at UCLouvain (max. 4 pages describing the objectives, methodologies, research calendar, expected outcome and optional secondments);
- A recommendation letter by an academic member of the home institution of the candidate describing the added value of the stay;
- A recommendation letter by an internationally recognized scientific personality;
- A recommendation letter by the host institution supervisor (in this letter, the host supervisor should also add a comment on what he/she intends to do in relation to the candidate’s career placement).

For confidentiality reasons, the letter of recommendation of the home/host institution can be directly sent to the UCLouvain Research Department (crec-adre@uclouvain.be) by specifying the name of the applicant/researcher in the object of the email.

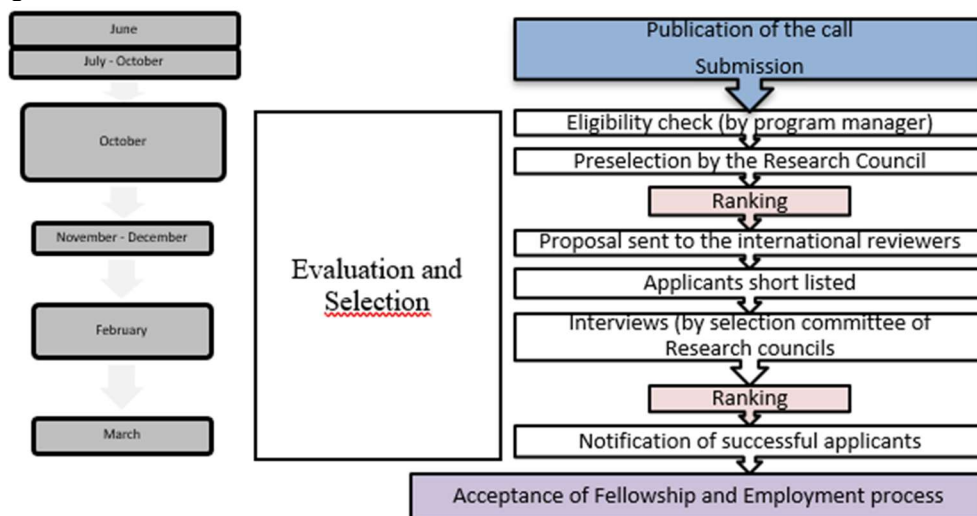
Very important information:

- The file (application form and annexes) **will be sent in one PDF format**.
- The file **will be filled in English** in order to facilitate the evaluation by international experts. Exceptions are possible according to the research topic but **must be duly justified** (written request addressed to the President of the UCLouvain Research Council prior to the application submission).
- Only **complete applications will be eligible**.

All applicants will receive an email notification soon after the call deadline.

6. Evaluation and selection

The evaluation of all proposals will be operated in **4 steps** according to the following organigram and evaluation criteria:



1. Administrative eligibility check

Within 3 weeks after the call deadline, the eligibility check of all **complete applications** will be carried out by the Program Manager.

! The incomplete applications (cf. point 12) might be rejected at this stage !

For applications with missing/lacking information on mobility background, etc., the candidates will be requested to send additional information within five working days. The eligibility of the candidates in terms of transnational mobility will also be checked at this stage.

2. Preselection by the Research Council

Four weeks after the call deadline, a first ‘internal’ evaluation will be conducted by the Research Council according to the same evaluation criteria as those used during the second “external” evaluation (cf. point 6.3.).

Regarding the ‘internal’ evaluation, the Research Council selects proposals (at least three times the number of available grants) for a second step of “external” evaluation. At the issue of the preselection phase, the results will be communicated by letter to each unsuccessful applicant. An evaluation summary report (ESR) will be sent to the candidates, providing the various reasons for acceptance or rejection as well as the strong and weak points of the proposal.

The selection by the members of the Research Council will be operated following the evaluation criteria listed below:

Selection criteria	Weighting
Quality of the candidate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific merits of the candidates (curriculum vitae, publications, recommendation letters, practical/management experience, transnational mobility, intersectoral mobility, etc.) Importantly, a <i>career break (pregnancy, serious illness, other to be duly justified)</i>, will be taken into account 	40%
Quality of the research and training project Research project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originality and innovation of the project, and relationship to the ‘state of the art’ of research in the field Research/technological quality, including any interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary aspects of the proposal Feasibility of the project in the proposed time Method Link and relevance with the ongoing activities of the host unit Training project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of new knowledge and potential career development Relevance to the expertise of the candidate 	40%
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added value of the stay both for the candidate and the host unit (support to promising young research teams and reinforcement of excellence poles by giving the opportunity to welcome high level post-doctoral researchers) Career perspectives of the candidates after their stay in Belgium (possibility of returning to the country of origin and/or career perspectives inside the host institution) Potential transfer of know-how and prospects for further cooperation 	20%
Total	100%

3. Evaluation by international peer reviewers

Each application admitted to the second step of evaluation will be reviewed by minimum two international peer reviewers who will be identified by the applicant/researcher together with his/her supervisor in the host institution (point 21 of the Application Form). Obviously, reviewers should not be connected to the applicants nor the host supervisor in any way. Please refer to the definition of the concept of conflict of interest commonly accepted by the Research Council.² Please be vigilant when identifying the names of international experts. If a conflict of interest is identified, the **project might be excluded from the selection**.

The Program manager will then ask each external expert to evaluate the project based on the above-mentioned criteria.

Experts are requested to examine all aspects that must be taken into consideration for each criterion and assess the research and training project as follows, by comparing with similar projects in the field at an international level:

Very superior	Superior	Equivalent	Inferior	Very inferior	I cannot judge

The international peer reviewers will be contacted by e-mail and asked to give their written opinion on the proposals and to send it directly to the Program manager. Written evaluation guidelines will be provided to participating experts. Each international expert will be asked to fill in a confidential evaluation form taking into account the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria listed above as well as a global appreciation and suggestions.

The evaluations by the international peer reviewers will complement the evaluations made by the Research Council before the last step of the evaluation.

4. Interviews by selection committee of the Research Council

The interviews will be the last selection round, they will take place immediately after the stepper-review evaluation (February). Teams interviews will be conducted by the Selection Committees.

The list of finally ranked proposals will be gathered in three different categories:

A: Priority list	excellent quality proposals, retained for funding
B: Reserve list	excellent or very good quality proposals which cannot be funded due to budget limitation
C: Rejection list	other proposals which do not meet the selection criteria

² Definition of the conflict of interest: for a given proposal, a conflict of interest exists if an expert:

- (a) has been involved in the preparation of the grant proposal;
- (b) will benefit directly or indirectly from the proposal in case of acceptance;
- (c) has a close family or personal relationship with the applicant or his/her supervisor;
- (d) has had (over the past five years), has, or is likely to have (within the next twelve months) a reporting relationship with the applicant or his/her supervisor;
- (e) has been a thesis (co-)sponsor of the applicant or his/her supervisor;
- (f) is employed by or acts as a subcontractor to the applicant or his/her supervisor;
- (g) has had (over the past five years), has or intends to have (within the next twelve months) a research collaboration with the applicant or his/her supervisor.

At the issue of the complete evaluation phase (+/- five months after the call deadline), the final results will be communicated by letter to each applicant, directly and via the host university.

An evaluation summary report (ESR) will be sent to the candidates, providing the various reasons for acceptance or rejection as well as the strong and weak points of the proposal. The selected applicants will have to start their research stay not later than 12 months after the call closing date.

The applications put on the reserve list will be awarded a fellowship in case of withdrawal of one or more selected applicants. This list will be kept open until the end of September 2024.

7. Budgetary aspects

Fifteen 3-years fellowships will be funded during the 2024 call. For each selected researcher, a fellowship agreement will be concluded. The “FSR Incoming Postdoctoral Fellowship” program offers a tax-free fellowship with full social security coverage.

However, this coverage is not taken into account for all countries³.

Concretely, the fellowship includes:

- A net monthly allowance, adapted following the experience of the fellow (average in 2023 with 2 years of working experience after the PhD: 3.002,57 EUR).
- The personal liability insurance costs;
- The contribution to the National Office of Social Security (NOSS);⁴
- A bench fee of EUR/year 5,000 for laboratory-based research or EUR/year 2,500 for non-laboratory based research;
- Travel allowance: this amount contributes to cover the expenses of the researcher caused by the mobility necessary to take up the fellowship⁵. It will be paid one time as a lump-sum per year and will be calculated taken into account of the country of origin of the candidate (depending on the country, it could range from 250 EUR/year to 2.000 EUR/year).

8. Optional secondments

During the implementation of the research project the researcher may be seconded outside his/her host organisation to an organisation in a Member State or Associated Countries. Secondments of the researcher to partner organisations are encouraged, but they should be relevant, feasible, and beneficial for the researcher and in line with the project objectives. The secondment phase can be a single period or can be divided into shorter mobility periods. The maximum duration of secondments is defined according to the total duration of the fellowship:

Duration of the fellowship	Maximum duration of secondment
≤ 18 months	3 months
> 18 months	6 months

³ Full social security applies to EU nationals as well as nationals from Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada (also a separate agreement with Québec), Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, India, Israel, Japan, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Morocco, San Marino, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, the United States and South Korea. Fellows from other countries will be subject to partial social security contributions.

⁴ As foreseen by the Royal Decree of 26/03/2003 in relation to foreign workers (M.B. of 28/04/2003).

⁵ The travel allowance does not refer to research mobility and thus, is not intended to cover the travel costs for the attendance of the selected candidates at international conferences and meetings.

Optional secondment(s) should be motivated under point 19 of the Application Form.

9. Reports

9.1. Mid-term report

At mid-term, the fellowship holder, in consultation with the supervisor, will submit to the UCLouvain Research Administration a short progress report (maximum 3 pages) on his/her research activities, potential difficulties and perspectives.

For fellowships of less than 24 months only a final report is due.

9.2. Final report

At the end of the stay a more detailed report, however not exceeding 5 pages, will be submitted. Guidelines for reporting will be communicated in due time to all grantees.

The main purpose of the report is to assess whether the objectives of the post-doctoral stay have been met. In that respect it is not purely a scientific report. A list of publications, missions and contributions to scientific meetings has to be attached to the report.

These documents have to be sent electronically to the following email addresses: alizee.scolas@uclouvain.be; sara.wilmet@uclouvain.be (ADRE UCLouvain).

10. Publications

Every publication released or event held in connection with the research stay should clearly refer to the author as a *beneficiary of a FSR Incoming Post-doctoral Fellowship*.

11. Support to researchers

The host institution is member of the EURAXESS network (www.euraxess.org) covering more than 600 EURAXESS support centres located in 42 European countries. This is an initiative of the European Commission aiming at supporting researcher mobility and career development while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the world. If you are a mobile researcher, EURAXESS “Services” can assist you and your family in every step of your move, starting in your home country and continuing until you have settled in a new one. This free personalised service is here to remove red tape and make your life easier. You will receive comprehensive, up-to-date information, as well as customised assistance on all matters relating to your professional and daily life.

A mobility team within the university helps researchers from abroad who would like to pursue their research at UCLouvain or researchers who want to pursue their research in another institution abroad. The team is composed of three “researcher’s mobility” advisors: Sara Wilmet, Florence Vande Cappelle and Elisabeth Colon. Researchers are invited to contact the Louvain Welcome Desk (website: <https://uclouvain.be/en/research/welcome-desk> - email address: welcome-researcher@uclouvain.be) to get support regarding all legal and administrative aspects (visa application, work permit, etc.) but also for practical issues (accommodation, child care facilities, etc.).

12. Checklist for the eligibility of the application

This check-list is intended to help to fill out the application.

- I am eligible to submit my application (required experience, max. 5 years, mobility condition)
- I have been in contact with a supervisor in the host institution who is willing to support my application
- I am planning to stay 12 up to 36 months
- My application form is complete (Application form + requested annexes) and filled in English (or I have received a written agreement from the President of the Research Council)
- My application is in accordance with the required evaluation criteria
- My application file contains the required signatures
- I have checked that the expert I propose are not in conflict of interest with myself or my UCLouvain's supervisor
- Subject to my eligibility, I have applied / will apply to other funding opportunities (F.R.S.-FNRS Grants and Fellowships Call 2024, HE-MSCA-PF Call 2024, etc.)
- An electronic version of the complete file was sent to crec-adre@uclouvain.be in one PDF format
- The application file is introduced by the **1st of October 2023 at 9 am** (Brussels time)

! Very important information: only complete proposals will be reviewed !

Good luck!