PhD Call selection guidelines
AFR PhD 2020
Selection Guidelines

Table of Contents

1. AFR PhD Objectives................................................................................................................. 3
2. AFR PhD Selection Criteria .................................................................................................... 3
3. Selection Process ..................................................................................................................... 3
   3.1. Eligibility check .................................................................................................................. 3
   3.2. Research integrity .............................................................................................................. 4
   3.3. AFR Selection Panel ......................................................................................................... 4
   3.4. Remote Review by AFR Selection Panel ......................................................................... 4
   3.5. AFR Selection Panel Meeting .......................................................................................... 5
4. AFR Call Timeline 2019 ......................................................................................................... 5
5. Annex: AFR PhD Synthesis ....................................................................................................... 6
**1. AFR PhD Objectives**

In line with FNR’s vision, mission and strategic priorities, the key objectives of the AFR PhD programme are stated as follows:

- Attract and train the most talented doctoral candidates from any nationality in Luxembourg.
- Support excellent Luxembourg stemming doctoral candidates to undertake their PhD training abroad.
- Enhance high quality standards for PhD training in Luxembourg, by ensuring that the principles of the National Quality Framework for Doctoral Training (NQFDT) (adopted in 2015) are respected in the framework of the AFR programme.
- The AFR programme has a bottom-up approach, i.e. proposals in all domains of research and technological development are eligible for funding.
- The FNR has signed the “Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)” and therefore has introduced changes in how it assesses research proposals. This means that the FNR evaluates quality and impact independently of journal-based metrics and gives value to all research outputs.

**2. AFR PhD Selection Criteria**

1. **Project’s scientific quality/potential**
   - Excellence/originality
   - Quality of proposal writing, in particular clarity of aims and methods
   - Feasibility of project idea

2. **Applicant’s profile/potential**
   - Curriculum Vitae (grades of diploma, reference letter/s, achievements, incl. international or intersectoral mobility experience)
   - Motivation to engage into the PhD

3. **Quality of host institution, supervision and training**
   - Supervisor’s (and possibly co-supervisor’s) track record
   - Training and research environment

4. **Potential impact of the project (academic/scientific or other)**

**3. Selection Process**

3.1. **Eligibility check**

Following each call, proposals undergo an eligibility check. In order to be eligible, proposals must:
- be submitted before the deadline,
- be written in English,
- be complete and respect the requested format and maximum length (characters)
- be submitted by an eligible AFR candidate: fulfil the criteria to register officially into a PhD (at the latest at project start) or be not enrolled in the PhD for more than (12) twelve months prior to the call deadline.
be submitted together with an eligible supervisor in an eligible host institution.

In addition, given the limited number of grants available, the main supervisor and co-supervisor of an AFR application may support one AFR candidate only per call. Applications not conforming to one of these elements are rejected at this stage and are not peer-reviewed.

### 3.2. Research Integrity

**Research misconduct** e.g. provision of false information, plagiarism or falsification of data, may result in a rejection of the proposal. Applicants must comply with the ‘FNR Research Integrity Guidelines’ accessible under: [http://www.fnr.lu/en/Calls, Forms & Guidelines/General Guidelines](http://www.fnr.lu/en/Calls, Forms & Guidelines/General Guidelines).

### 3.3. AFR Selection Panel

AFR PhD proposals are reviewed by an international expert panel composed by a chair and up to 17 domain experts and ad hoc peer reviewers. The panel is nominated annually by the FNR.

Before accessing the proposal, panel members have to sign a confidentiality agreement abiding to the FNR Ethics Charter and Code of Conduct for Research Assessment. Panel members have to declare a potential conflict of interest (COI) at any moment in the selection process; in case of a conflict of interest, panel members withdraw from their reviewer and selection panel tasks.

Application documents and names of panel members are handled with care and treated as confidential before, during and after the evaluation process.

The funding decision that is sent to the applicants does not mention the name of panel members.

If for some reason the panel members are not able to fulfil their obligations for a given work, the FNR should be informed immediately. The work cannot be delegated to another person without prior written agreement by the FNR.

As a signatory of the DORA Declaration, each expert/panel member is supposed to evaluate quality and impact independently of journal-based metrics and give value to all types of research outputs.

### 3.4. Remote Review by AFR Selection Panel

Following the eligibility check, eligible proposals are allocated to panel members for remote review and ad hoc peer reviewers.

Each proposal is reviewed by two experts/panel members that are closest to the domain of the proposal. The panel members are generalists and not necessarily experts in the specific domain.

As a signatory of the DORA Declaration, each expert/panel member is supposed to evaluate quality and impact independently of journal-based metrics and give value to all types of research outputs.

Full proposals together with the remote reviews are made available to panel members through the FNR online review system one week before the panel meeting.

---

1 See [http://www.fnr.lu/guidelines](http://www.fnr.lu/guidelines)
3.5. AFR Selection Panel Meeting

The panel meeting is presided by the panel chair whose role it is to:

- Supervise the evaluation process of proposals
- Ensure that the maximum number of proposals to be allocated for a given call is respected and that the selection outcome is fair.

The panel rates all proposals as A+, A, B or C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Score</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Proposal of excellent quality and outstanding international standards that should be funded as proposed. The proposal scores excellent on all or most criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Proposal of very good quality and high international calibre that should be funded. The proposal scores very good (and even excellent) on all or most criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Proposal of very good quality, but with shortcomings on one of the selection criteria. The proposal could be improved to become an excellent proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Proposal of insufficient quality and with major shortcomings on one or more selection criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the meeting, taking into account the available budget, the panel draws a list of proposals recommended for funding and those not recommended for funding. A+ and A proposals which, due to budget restrictions, cannot be funded will be ranked, in case additional funding will become available (reserve list).

For all proposals, the panel finalises the final synthesis after the panel meeting.

This synthesis is the only feedback that will be sent to the applicant. The remote reviews will not be made public and help the panel to set up the final funding recommendation.

The funding decision will be send to the applicant and the supervisor(s).

4. AFR Call Timeline 2020

- December 2019: Launch of AFR Call
- 11 March 2020: Submission deadline
- March - June 2020: Evaluation
- July 2020: Communication of FNR funding decision
- July – Dec. 2020: Conclusion of AFR Grant agreements
- 1st January 2021: Latest start of PhD projects funded under this call

Following the panel meeting, the panel synthesis will be validated by the panel and the funding decision will be validated by the FNR before communication to the applicants, their supervisors.
5. Annex: AFR PhD Synthesis

AFR Reference:

Name of Applicant:

Overall funding recommendation: Retained/Not retained for funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final score</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Score</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Proposal of excellent quality and outstanding international standards that should be funded as proposed. The proposal scores excellent on all or most criteria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Proposal of very good quality and high international calibre that should be funded. The proposal scores very good (and even excellent) on all or most criteria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Proposal of very good quality, but with shortcomings on one of the selection criteria. The proposal could be improved to become an excellent proposal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Proposal of insufficient quality and with major shortcomings on one or more selection criteria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summarise the PhD project idea in one sentence, and indicate up to 3 main strengths and weaknesses of the proposal referring to the selection criteria and in coherence with the final overall funding recommendation (max 0.5 page)

Does the proposal raise ethical or data protection issues? Yes/No

If yes, please comment: