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FCT

GUIDE FOR WRITING AND SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS TO THE 2013 FCT INVESTIGATOR GRANTS

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FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

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INTRODUCTION

This guide for writing and submitting an application to the FCT Investigator Grants is intended to guide you through the application process and to help you prepare, write and submit a good application.

The guide draws on information in the FCT Investigator section of the FCT website, including legal documents setting the rules and conditions for funding of the FCT Investigator Grants: 2013 Regulations governing funding for the FCT Investigator and the Official Announcement of the 2013 call for the FCT Investigator Grants.

This guide does not override the above-mentioned documents, which are legally binding.

PRIOR TO SUBMISSION

Who may submit applications?

Applications are submitted individually by applicants to an FCT Investigator Grant. The requirements for applicants are set forth in the Regulations and in the FCT Investigator announcement. The entire application should be written in English.

Registration on the FCT Investigator website

Please note that you will have to register on the FCT-SIG Information System – in order to submit an application. For detailed information on how to register, or on how to recover your username and password, please refer to the instructions.
Using the FCT-SIG login credentials, you can access both the FCT/SIG-CV platform and the FCT Investigator website. On the FCT/SIG-CV platform, you will need to create or update your CV. On the FCT Investigator website, you will have access to other components of the application form.

What you should know before submitting an application

Official announcement and Regulations

Before starting to prepare your application, make sure that you are well informed on the regulations governing this call by reading the supporting documents, including the legal documents.
The terms of admissibility, as well as the rules and requirements of the different phases of the application process, are set forth in:

- Regulations governing funding for the FCT Investigator - 2013, which establish the general terms under which funding may be granted to support the FCT Investigator.

- FCT Investigator call announcement, which sets forth technical and legal conditions not defined in the regulations or specifies the general terms set forth in the regulations.
- Law 28/2013 (19 February 2013) that establishes the legal framework for contracting PhD holders within the FCT Investigator programme.

The FCT Investigator application website

On the FCT Investigator application website you will have access to the following:

- The homepage has a brief overview of the programme, the anticipated profile of the applicants and other application requirements.
- Supporting documents to download, such as the "Guide for writing and submitting applications to the 2013FCT Investigator Grants" and the "2013 FCT Investigator Guide for Peer Review".
- News

Application to the FCT Investigator Grant will require that you login to the website. After logging in, you will access the application form with the following sections:

- Description of the Application
- Executive summary
- Full description of the application
- Ethical and legal issues
- Host institution
- Supporting materials
- Overview of the Application (including how to validate and lock the application)

The Application form

The various sections can be accessed from the left-hand side menu bar. Changes are transferred to the FCT server automatically when you navigate away from a field. This enables you to work on the application form over several sessions until you consider it

complete. Once the validation test has been passed, you may lock the application, which completes the submission process.

Please note that, during the first days of the call, some sections, such as "Validate and lock application", may not be available. These sections are unlikely to be used during the first week of the call. Should this occur, FCT will likely be fine-tuning some of the details in these sections.

General recommendations

- We recommend careful and timely preparation of the application.
- Carefully read the instructions provided in this guide and on the application form itself. Please make sure that you have read through all the documents available on the FCT website regarding this application, before contacting FCT. Please remember that FCT is not expected to answer to questions pertaining to information available in the documents.
- Learn about the structure of the application form before you begin filling it in. As an FCT Investigator applicant, you will have to gather information from the host institution of your choice. You will also need to discuss and negotiate the terms and conditions that the host institution will provide to ensure that you can implement your research programme and further develop your career.

We strongly advise that you prepare this information as early as possible as you may need to consult with more than one host institution. If you wish to include a host institution that is not registered on the FCT database, please send an email to info.if@fct.pt requesting its addition. This email should contain the following information on the host institution:

- Name
- Acronym
- Email / telephone number
- Institutional address (please include the city and post code)

- Name of the legal representative
- *Chave de associação activa[1]*
- Managing institution (if applicable)

The new institution will be added to the list of choices within two working days after the submission of the request.

- Read all the sections of the application form in advance so you will have an idea of what is being asked for and to give yourself time to gather all the information required for submission.
- Read the News section on the FCT Investigator website regularly.
- Please bear in mind that the extended CV on the FCT/SIG-CV Portal is vital to your application. Make sure it is updated before you lock your application.
- The FCT-SIG/CV system for curricula submission allows applicants to indicate information in the field *Name in* Publications, that will be used during the evaluation phase to simplify the evaluators' work. Please use this field if your full name does not match the name used in scholarly journals and books.
- Previous evaluation panels have noted that CVs were not sufficiently succinct, making it difficult to find relevant information. We advise applicants to heed this comment, in particular by highlighting the most important publications and the most relevant activities in recent years. Please remember that it is your responsibility to provide the evaluation panel with all the relevant information that may ensure that your application receives a fair review.
- Special attention is recommended when choosing the *keywords* that best characterise the application, given their *importance in the evaluation process*.
- Text should be input directly onto the form, or, alternatively, you may copy, paste and save into the form sub-components previously prepared with a word processor. You can always globally view the contents of the form and validate them, thus reducing the errors during the application.

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[1] Association key

- *Do not use quotation marks (")* to embrace parts of your text. Some types of quotation marks (") may determine that the text after them is ignored. Please verify your saved texts for errors.

- Do not assume that the form or the rules for submission of applications are the same as those used by other funding agencies, as those from the previous year or as those that someone else told you about before.

- The system provides an *explanation for each error that is detected*. Read and interpret this message carefully and proceed accordingly. It is much faster to do this than to contact FCT to report the error messages.

- There is a *final verification process* before locking. Waiting until the last minute to make corrections can be risky.

- Probably the best advice for any candidate to a major call where applications are submitted online is: *plan and complete your application process as early as possible*. That way you can ensure that, if needed, FCT will be able to provide you with the best possible assistance.

How to write a good application

Write in such a way as to convince a top expert in your field that your ideas deserve to be funded and your career supported. You will have to provide evidence that you are among the very best in your field by any international standards. It is of crucial importance that you demonstrate that you are a leading, independent scientist and/or that you actively strive to pursue an independent career in science. At the same time, you must also convince someone who is scientifically literate, but may not have specific background in your area. You may also point out the importance of your research project in terms of specific national interests or international relevance, should this be the case.

Careful reading of the evaluation criteria listed in the [FCT Investigator Guide for Peer Review](#) will give you a good idea of how the application will be evaluated. Read these criteria carefully and make sure that your application addresses those critical points.

How to direct questions to FCT

Information regarding the contents of the application form may be requested by e-mail to info.if@fct.pt.

For questions related to technical aspects of the website, please contact the webmaster at webmaster@fct.pt.

SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION

Please note that you cannot create more than one application.

The application form is organised into sections, some of which are required and others optional. The sections that you will need to fill in are the following:

A. Executive summary

    1. Synopsis of CV/ major accomplishments

    2. Synopsis of the research project and career development plan

    3. Number of years after completion of the PhD

    4. Justification for deviations, if applicable (optional)

B. Full description of the application

    1. Research project

        Background

        Research plan and methods

        Expected outcomes/ Impact

        Major references

    2. Career development plan

        Career objectives

        Development / Consolidation of an independent career

        Networking/Internationalisation plans

C. Ethical and legal issues

D. Host Institution

    1. Select the host institution

    2. Description of the host conditions

E. Supporting materials (optional)

Reminder: The extended CV, as featured on the FCT/SIG-CV platform, is an integral component of your application. After locking your application, please wait 24hours for your CV to be visible in your application form. Please make sure that your CV is updated before locking your application. Once the application is locked, the contents of your CV

will be immediately copied to the evaluation platform and no further changes will be allowed.

In the following subsections of this guide, you will find a more detailed description of the contents requested in each section of the application form. You will also find some tips and suggestions for writing a good application. Many of the fields in the form have character limits. Try to be concise, as you will not be able to save text with more characters than those allowed.

Description of the Application

When you access this menu for the first time after registering your application, the reference code for the application is automatically generated. This will be *FCT's unique identification code for the application* until all activities are completed.

At this stage you will have to fill in the following:

Position level to which you are applying

From the drop-down menu indicate which of the 3 levels you are applying to:

- *"Starting grant"*: aimed at PhD holders with more than 3 years and less than 8 years post-PhD experience at the time of application, with no need for previous experience of scientific independence;

- *"Development grant"*: aimed at PhD holders with a curriculum of exceptional merit and experience as an independent researcher.

- *"Consolidation grant"*: aimed at PhD holders with experience as an independent researcher, with a curriculum of exceptional merit and evidence of scientific leadership in a particular area of knowledge.

Scientific independence is defined by criteria such as:

- Being a principal investigator or group leader of a research team;

- Having obtained funding as principal investigator in competitive calls launched by national and/or international funding agencies;
- Publications as senior/corresponding author and/or publications where the PhD supervisor is not a co-author.

In the 2013 call, a tolerance of 11 months is given to applicants to starting grants. . For example, eight years after PhD completion may mean eight years and 11 months.

ResearcherID (optional)

Please provide your ResearcherID, if you have one. This information will be used during the evaluation phase to circumvent author ambiguity that arises within the research community and will greatly simplify the work of reviewers.

Title of the project

The title should be brief, informative, understandable to a reader with a general scientific background and suitable for public dissemination.

Scientific Area

The scientific area should be chosen from the OECD´s adopted Field of Science and Technology (FOS) classification, available in two levels of detail in drop-down menus: the main scientific area and the secondary scientific area.

Keywords

Please list 5 keywords. The keywords are likely to be used in the peer-review evaluation of your application and should accurately reflect the scientific content of your application. This is particularly important for interdisciplinary applications.

Are you eligible for an exploratory research project?

In this section you will inform FCT if you are eligible for an "Exploratory Research Project". Should your application be recommended for funding you will be asked to

submit your research project in a form that complies with the applicable FCT regulations. To be eligible, you should not be the principal investigator in any new or ongoing FCT-funded project after 1st January 2014.

Declaration of Disability

In this section, you should state your degree of disability, if greater than 60%

Application Form

A. Executive summary

Writing a clear and informative executive summary is critical in preparing a good application.

The executive summary comprises two major fields: A synopsis of your CV and a synopsis that combines your research project and career development plan.

Major contributions/highlights

In this text box you should list up to ten publications or equivalent research outputs that support your accomplishments. This should include widely accepted research outputs for a given scientific area. Please note that the panel will be asked to judge the quality of the research outputs. For publications with more than ten authors, please indicate the corresponding author and your position in the author list.

A.1. Synopsis of CV/major accomplishments

(Maximum 6 500 characters)

When preparing your executive summary, consider the following points:

- List your major achievements in a narrative form, but using objective indicators and substantive arguments. Indicators include your main academic and professional degrees, publications in major multidisciplinary international peer-review journals or in top specialty peer-review journals. Equivalent contributions/indicators from areas where international peer-reviewed

publications are not available or are not common practice should be provided and explained (for example peer-reviewed conference proceedings and/or monographs on specific research fields). Other relevant achievements may include competitive funding from national and international funding agencies, patents, chapters in books, performances and exhibitions (to the extent that they embody research), supervision of graduate students and prizes, honours and awards.

- You should also provide objective information that helps the panel to assess if and for how long you have been working as an independent investigator.

Example 1[2]: J Smith graduated in Physics from the University College of London in 1990 and completed a PhD degree in Cell Biology from the Max Planck Institute in Dresden in 1995. Since obtaining his PhD degree, J Smith published 39 papers in international peer review journals with an accumulated impact factor of 180 and with over 3600 citations. 25 of the 39 papers were published independently from the PhD supervisor and 20 were published as a senior (corresponding) author. Of these, 5 were published in major multidisciplinary scientific journals including Cell, Nature and Science. Eight papers were published in the highest impact factor journal in the area of Neurosciences. In 2005, J Smith established his own group comprising 9 investigators including PhD students and Post-Docs. Since his graduation, J Smith completed the supervision of 4 PhD students and 3 Post-Docs.

Example 2[3]: J Smith graduated in Communication Sciences from the New University of Lisbon in 1999 and completed a PhD degree in Film and Visual Studies from Harvard University, in the United States, in 2005. In 2007, he was a Fellow at the Internationales Kolleg für Kulturtechnikforschung und Medienphilosophie at the Bauhaus-Universität in Weimar, Germany. Since obtaining his PhD degree, J Smith completed a series of audio-video installations and photographic works that explore the intersections of film, the

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[2] The achievements listed here illustrate a fictional application and should not be regarded as formal requirements or major achievements, specifically endorsed by FCT.
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visual arts, and architecture. He also collaborated with D Rodowick on "ABC", a multi-media project about men at sea and fish on boats. He has published 7 articles in journals such as Art Journal, Artforum, Parkett, and October magazine. *He has also published a book,"EFG"* (XYZ *University Press, 2008), which won the 2009 Society for Cinema and Media Studies award for best book in film studies. J Smith has been an Assistant Professor at the University of Lisbon since 2012. His research and teaching interests include minimalism, dance, media, and activist art.*

In rare instances, some or all of the above criteria may not apply. The applicants are advised to clearly explain unconventional paths, gaps in their research career and any other exceptional circumstances, so that the application may be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

The executive summary of your CV should clearly refer to the indicators of scientific independence and to the time since completion of your PhD degree.

A.2. Synopsis of the research project and career development plan

(Maximum 2 500 characters)

In this section, you should identify the "big scientific question" that you want to address in your research project. You should also provide sufficient information that convinces the evaluation panel that you have the skills, know-how and, as appropriate, a research team and funding required to pursue your major goals. It is important that you refer to the host conditions made available for your project and provide evidence that you sought to ensure that there is appropriate institutional support to carry out your research project and career development plan.

Please note that, in addition to the objective information provided in the synopsis of your CV, you may need to explain your career stage and to justify that your application meets the requirements of the position/ level that you are applying for.

In preparing your *career development plan,* the following guidelines should be considered:

- Clearly state where you are in your career and state your short-term (next 3 years) and long-term (over 5 years) career objectives. Clearly identify what further research activities or training are needed to attain these goals.

- Briefly describe how the research project, together with other development activities, will provide the experience that you need to launch and carry out an independent career.

- Explain how the research project relates to your goals and how it integrates in the scientific/ research strategy of the host institution.

A.3. Number of years after completion of the PhD

A.4. Justification for deviations
(If applicable, maximum 500 characters)
Provide any valid explanation for the difference between the number of years indicated in A.3 and the ones that can be inferred from your CV. There are a number of circumstances that may justify deviations. These include maternity, paternity leave, illness, etc. If this is the case, please indicate the circumstances here.

B. Full description of the application
There is no pre-established structure to describe the research projects and career development plans, which will be different for different career paths and research profiles. To facilitate the application, the form contains predefined text boxes that you may find useful to describe the key points of your application. However, you can always choose to ignore the titles indicated in the text boxes and provide a title that more appropriately describes the contents on the text boxes.

B.1. Research project

(Maximum 20 000 characters)

Use the 4 text boxes in this section to present your research project. The following points should be addressed when appropriate:

- You may start by presenting a *background* (maximum of 5 000 characters) overview of the research field. Here you should include references to your previous work, show your knowledge of the state of the art, and explain the innovative nature of your application.

- Describe the *research plan and methods* (maximum of 5 000 characters). Start by identifying the major scientific question you wish to address and the objectives of your project. Include hypothesis and list specific aims and objectives that will be used to address the hypothesis. Provide a general description of the approach used to reach the aims. Consider possible limitations and alternative approaches.

- Refer to the *expected outcomes/impact* (maximum of 5 000 characters) of your project and how this will impact on your career development and on the scientific strategy of the host institution. If you expect your research to be a demonstrable example of excellent research contributing to society and to the economy, this should be mentioned. If actions of scientific dissemination are adequate to your research project, and you consider organising them, describe your plans.

- List *major references* (maximum of 5 000 characters), including your own work.

B.2. Career development plan

(Maximum 5 000 characters)

Use the 3 text boxes in this section to present your career development plan. The following points should be addressed:

- Clearly state where you are in your career and state your short-term (next 3 years) and long-term (over 5 years) *career objectives* (maximum 2000 characters).

- Clearly identify what further research activities or training are needed towards the *development/consolidation of an independent career* (maximum 2 000 characters).

- Explain how the research project relates to your goals and how it integrates in the scientific/ research strategy of the host institution.
- Present your *networking/internationalisation plans* (maximum 1 000 characters). Indicate your international collaborations and how they relate with the proposed research project, if applicable.

C. Ethical and legal issues

(If applicable, maximum 500 characters)

In this section, you should disclose and explain any ethical or legal issues regarding your research project. Please refer to the Ethics Guide for further information on the nature of these issues. Supporting documents should be referred to and uploaded here.

D. Host institution

Choose the institution where you wish to develop your research project and career.

The evaluation panels will determine whether the research project and the conditions specified by the host institution are adequate for your career development plan, either to consolidate your position as an independent scientist or to facilitate the transition to independence.

Please note that on the FCT online platform Portal de Ciência e Tecnologia (PCT) there is a designated area where the host institution should confirm its association with and its support to the applicant's research project and career development plan.

The host institution needs to provide a binding statement that the conditions for independence already exist or will be made available to the candidate should the application be funded.

Applications that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

Host institutions should be aware that recruitment policies that allow attracting and retaining the best scientists, including an FCT Investigator during and beyond the initial support from FCT, will be valued by all possible means.

D.1. Select the host institution

This section identifies the institution involved in the project from a scientific standpoint. You should indicate the smallest possible research unit in which you are planning to conduct your work. For example: select "Centro de Física da Universidade de Lisboa" from the dropdown menu, rather than "Universidade de Lisboa".

To add a host institution, you can start by typing the first few letters of the name of the institution, then choose the desired institution from the pull-down list of those available.

If the institution meets the requirements but is not on the list, you must send an email to info.if@fct.pt requesting the addition of the institution to the FCT database, as specified under *"General recommendations"*.

It is the responsibility of the host institution to designate the legal organisation that will formally sign the contracts with FCT and the FCT Investigator.

D.2. Description of the host conditions

(Maximum 1 500 characters)

You should also specify the conditions that are available or/and will be made available to ensure that you may successfully complete your research project and further develop your career during and beyond the time that you are funded as an FCT Investigator. This information will be made available to the host institution that will need to confirm it and possibly add to it.

E. Supporting Materials

Supporting materials are documents or other information that are likely to be used in the administrative processing of your application. These may include honour and/or degree certificates, statements of incapacity, documents describing the nature of the ethical/legal issues related to your project or any other documents that are required to validate information provided in this application.

For example, if you evoked maternity/paternity leave to justify a lapse of time after completing the degree, you will need to provide legal documents that support your claim. No other documents besides those mentioned above will be considered in this section.

The maximum disk space reserved for each application is 10 MB. However, each file cannot exceed 1 MB. Acceptable formats are:

– GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)

– JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)

– PDF (Portable Document Format)

Clearly identify your files, by using the following sequence: Surname_Type of file_Name of file (Ex: Smith_Ethical_Legal_Issues_1, or Smith_PhD_certificate).

Extended CV

Your CV should be submitted using the FCT-SIG model available on the FCT/SIG-CV platform. Please make sure that you update your CV before submitting your application. The CVs will be locked immediately after you lock the application and no further changes will be considered for this call.

OVERVIEW AND LOCKING

The application overview link gives you access to the following options:

- Overview of the application
- Validate and lock the application

Overview of the application

The overview of the application displays the contents of the application fields in a single window, which includes a link to the CV only after the application is locked. You can view the details of a single section of the form or a group of sections.

Validate and lock the application

Locking the application is preceded by an automatic procedure that validates the application and checks for errors. After the application is completed, click on "Validate" to validate the entire application. When no errors are detected, you will need to confirm that you wish to lock the application. If there are errors, a list of errors detected is generated on the application form showing the section and field where the error occurred, along with a brief description of the problem that led to the error. **The existence of errors prevents locking.** The **alerts** issued during the validation do **not prevent locking.** Reread the General Recommendations and **do not wait until the deadline to validate your application.**

Once an application is locked, or after the deadline, you will no longer have access to the application form nor will you be allowed to make any further changes, but you may view its contents in the overview of the application. Please note that, after locking, FCT will not be able to unlock the application for you.

The locked application will generate two automatic e-mails: one to the individual applicant that submitted the application and a second one to the legal representative of the host institution, confirming submission of the application.