



# FCT

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

## **REGULATION**

**Evaluation and Funding  
of R&D Units**



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## Regulation

### Evaluation and funding of R&D units

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT I.P.) will undertake the evaluation of national scientific research and technological development units following the most rigorous international standards. This evaluation comes five years after the last evaluation of research units, and four years after the last evaluation of research units which hold the status of associated laboratory, according to Decree-Law n. 125/99 of April 20.

This evaluation exercise takes place at a time when substantial changes are taking place in the European framework programmes for funding, and new strategies to support scientific research and technological development are being defined. These strategies should enable effective responses to the major societal challenges of the Europe 2020 Agenda, while simultaneously strengthening Europe's competitiveness, economic growth and job creation within the global knowledge economy.

The construction of the European Research Area involves the establishment of national scientific strategies as well as their interaction with the main support instruments for science and technology in Europe. FCT subscribes to the chain of production, application and exploitation of knowledge as well as coherent interactions that benefit from synergies and complementarities between sciences,

technologies, social sciences and the humanities, each one contributing to the establishment of Portugal and of Portuguese scientific institutions in the European Research Area.

Research units represent a fundamental pillar in the consolidation of a modern and competitive scientific system in Portugal. They should gather critical mass that is adequate to their mission and promote creative environments where new ideas can emerge and where the best researchers may find the necessary conditions to execute their scientific projects and develop their own careers. Whenever appropriate, they should gather interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary resources, thus enhancing the ability to tackle complex problems and new societal challenges.

Within this evaluation exercise, diversity is considered a key factor for coherent development of the National Scientific and Technological System, and more effective organisational models are encouraged, ensuring a more rational use of resources and infrastructures and strengthening the competitiveness of Portugal within the European Research Area. For that purpose, units can choose to keep their current composition and organisation, or reorganise their configuration to one best suited to achieve their



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strategic goals. This reorganisation may include the creation of new research units, as well as the merger or closure of existing ones. Within the scope of the objectives of the present evaluation exercise, units should unequivocally demonstrate that the organisational model

proposed is the best for their scientific and/or technological objectives and their institutional mission, avoiding artificial associations for funding purposes, thematic redundancies or excessive dispersion of means and resources.

Funded research units should:

- i)** demonstrate scientific production of acknowledged merit by international standards;
- ii)** have suitable critical mass to achieve their objectives,;
- iii)** promote rational use of infrastructures, of technical means and of human resources;
- iv)** whenever appropriate, present a strategy that includes the contribution to differentiation, competitiveness and wealth generation in their geographical region;
- v)** contribute to the activities of dissemination and transfer of knowledge and technology.

Funds to be allocated to R&D units comprise two parts: core funding and strategic funding. Core funding combines factors such as indexation of unit dimension (small, medium or large), intensity of laboratory activity (high, medium or low / zero) proposed by the unit and validated by the evaluation panel, and the grade attributed to the unit in this evaluation exercise. R&D units graded as "Exceptional" and "Excellent" will, in addition, be awarded strategic funding for the development of its strategic programme, based on the evaluation panel's proposal.

Thus, in accordance with article 12 of Decree-Law 125/99 (20 April), and with paragraph f) of subsection 2 of article 3 of Decree-Law 55/2013 (17 April), which approved the Organic Law of Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT I.P.), and paragraph h) of article 21 of Law 3/2004 (15 January), republished by Decree-Law 5/2012 (17 January), and amended by Decree-law n. 123/2012 (20 June), on 3rd July 2013 the Board of FCT, deliberated to approve the Regulation for Evaluation and Funding of Research Units, which was ratified by dispatch by the Secretary of State of Science on 5th July 2013.



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## CHAPTER I

# Object and Scope

### Article 1

#### **Object**

1. The current regulation establishes the terms of the external evaluation of scientific research and technological development units, hereinafter called R&D units, under the responsibility of the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT).
2. The present regulation also establishes the conditions of pluriannual funding associated to the evaluation stated in the preceding paragraph.

### Article 2

#### **Scope**

The present regulation applies to all public R&D units, with the exception of state laboratories, as well as to private R&D units integrated into long-term public funding programmes or who wish to undergo the evaluation process, regardless of the time elapsed since their last evaluation.

## CHAPTER II

# Evaluation

### Section I - General provisions

#### Article 3

##### General principles

External evaluation of R&D units is governed by the general principles of public action, particularly the principles of transparency, independence and efficiency.

#### Article 4

##### Validity

Once completed, the evaluation described in the present regulation is valid for a period of six years, without prejudice to interim evaluations, to be carried out in accordance with article 24, or extraordinary evaluations which may be determined.

### Section II - Criteria, phases and evaluation results

#### Article 5

##### Periodic evaluation

**1.** Periodic evaluation is an external evaluation exercise of R&D Units, namely of the scientific and technological activities developed during a given time period and of the integrated strategy of scientific research and technological development to be carried out in the six subsequent years through a consistent strategic program.

**2.** The evaluation exercise is carried out through R&D Unit registration with FCT, under article 17, which allows units to keep the existing composition or reorganise themselves as most appropriate to achieve the strategic objectives, including the creation of new research units and the merger or closure of existing units.

## Article 6

### Evaluation Criteria

1. The evaluation criteria for R&D units are as follows:

- A. Productivity and contribution to the National Scientific and Technological System
- B. Scientific and technological merit of the research team.
- C. Scientific merit and innovative nature of the strategic programme
- D. Feasibility of work plan and reasonability of the requested budget
- E. Impact of the scientific, technological and cultural output.

2. Application of the evaluation criteria is performed according to what is established in the Evaluation Guide, which sets out parameters, as well as the relative weighting of each criterion and the grading scale, taking into account the specific profile of the R&D Unit(s), namely, the strands of basic or applied research, or experimental development.

## Article 7

### Evaluation Results

The evaluation grades are as follows:

Grade	Description
Exceptional	R&D Unit recognised as an international reference for its scientific and technological output and exceptional contributions to its area of research
Excellent	R&D Unit distinguished by the high quality and international merit of its scientific and technological outputs and with significant contributions to its area of research
Very Good	R&D Unit with high quality and national merit and with significant contributions of international relevance in its area of research
Good	R&D Unit with quality at the national level, reduced internationalisation and some contributions to its area of research domain.
Fair	R&D Unit without significant contributions to its area of research.
Poor	R&D Unit without contributions to its area of research and with other weaknesses.



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## Article 8

### Evaluation phases

1. The evaluation is performed in two phases, based on the elements mentioned in article 19.
2. The first phase of evaluation allocates grades of “Good”, “Fair” and “Poor”, based on the consensus evaluation reports carried out according to subsection 2 of article 6.
3. The second phase of evaluation allocates any of the grades mentioned in the previous article, based on the final evaluation reports carried out according to subsection 2 of article 6.

## Section III - Evaluation Panels

### Article 9

#### Composition and designation

1. Evaluation of R&D Units is performed by international evaluation panels, organised according to specific scientific domains and composed of experts of well-established international merit and expertise who are associated with foreign institutions.
2. The FCT Board nominates the members of the Evaluation Panel, after consultation with the foreign counterparts of FCT. The list of experts that constitute the Panel is approved by the Ministry.
3. The constitution and composition of the evaluation panels are published on the FCT website.
4. During the first phase of evaluation, the panel may also consult experts from foreign institutions that have been recommended by the R&D units under evaluation.
5. The constitution and functioning of the evaluation panels are subject to the rules of the Code of Administrative Procedure, as regards impediments and reasons for exclusion or suspicion.

### Article 10

#### Competencies

The evaluation panels are expected to:

- a) Apply the evaluation criteria and rating instruments to the scientific and technological activities of the R&D unit and to its integrated strategy for research and development for the following years by preparing consensus reports and opinions;
- b) Recommend to FCT, whenever necessary, recognised experts in specific scientific areas who will be expected to submit opinions.
- c) Recommend, and strongly justify, funding and/or any amendments to the work programme and/or the proposed budget;



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- d)** Prepare a report which includes, in addition to the results, any case of conflict of interest, and also reviews and/or produces recommendations that may contribute to the improvement the evaluation process.



## CHAPTER III

# Funding

### Article 11

#### Objectives

Funding allocated by FCT under this regulation aims to:

- a) Allow the execution of activities that enhance the R&D units and create or amplify the best conditions for the achievement of their objectives, namely structural or general expenditures;
- b) Reinforce the strategic R&D activities of units of acknowledged merit;
- c) Financially complement, as appropriate, R&D activities of the unit.

### Article 12

#### Beneficiaries

1. The status of beneficiary of funding under this regulation depends on the classification obtained by the R&D unit in the evaluation process, in accordance with the following article.
2. Private, for profit R&D units, as well as their autonomous centres, may not be beneficiaries of the funding foreseen in this Regulation.

### Article 13

#### Tranches, rankings, and funding calendar

1. Funding for R&D units consists of two tranches:
  - a) Core funding, to be allocated to units rated equal to or higher than “Good”, indexed to: the dimension of the unit, taking into account the number of PhD holders in the unit according to the definition criteria of integrated member established by FCT; to an adjustment factor corresponding to its laboratory intensity and to the rating obtained by the R&D unit in the evaluation process, as described in the Guide for Application;
  - b) Strategic funding, to be allocated to R&D units rated “Exceptional”, “Excellent” or “Very Good”, depending on the proposal of the evaluation panel, based on strategic programme presented by the unit.
2. The matrix of core funding which is applied to the dimension, laboratory intensity and R&D unit rating, is defined by dispatch of the Ministry and is included in the application guide.
3. The funding period extends until the next evaluation of R&D units, with possible adjustments, whenever circumstances demand.



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## Article 14

### **Funding allocation**

- 1.** Funds to be allocated to each tranche and ranking depend on FCT budget availability.
- 2.** The allocation of core and strategic funds depends on the normal signing of the Terms of Agreement (Termo de Aceitação) which contains, amongst other information, conditions of amendments to the programme, payment rules, eligibility and expenditure justifications, management structures, regulations of information and publicity.
- 3.** Beneficiary institutions are financed through national funds included in the FCT budget and, when eligible, co-financed by EU funds.

## Article 15

### **Amendment, suspension and cancellation of funding**

- 1.** Suspension or cancellation will be applied whenever default or severe default occur and according to what is established in the present regulation or in the Terms of Agreement .
- 2.** Depending on the results of the interim evaluation or an evaluation of exceptional character, amendments to the ongoing funding may occur, including cancellation of funding if the evaluation panel considers that a serious reduction in the quality of research activities has occurred.
- 3.** Suspension of funds may also occur when poor or non-functioning of the unit causes serious harm to the interests of the scientific research. Suspension will be converted into cancellation if the unit does not adopt management solutions suggested by FCT aimed at restoring normal functioning.
- 4.** FCT may determine scientific, technical or financial audits to R&D units, at any time.



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## CHAPTER IV

# Procedure

### Article 16

#### First Procedure

1. FCT publishes the evaluation procedures through announcements on the FCT website and in two major daily newspapers.
2. The announcements referred to in the preceding paragraph may describe technical conditions, other general elements of this regulation and other procedural issues that may be considered necessary.

### Article 17

#### Prior registration

1. R&D units must be registered with FCT.
2. Upon registration referred to in the previous entry, R&D units may:
  - a) Keep the R&D unit, without prejudice to changes in its scope or dimension;
  - b) Create new R&D units, including merging with existing units or
  - c) Extinguish an R&D unit, with the possibility of reintegrating researchers in existing units or participating in future units.
3. The organisational model of R&D unit should be clearly explained and justified.

### Article 18

#### Procedures and admissibility verification

1. The main components of supporting documentation for the evaluation process should be submitted in English.
2. The documents submitted by R&D units should provide information that allows evaluation of previous scientific activity of its members and of the unit itself (if such documentation exists) with reference to the evaluation criteria defined in article 6.
3. The verification of the formal requirements for admission to the evaluation process, including regulatory aspects of the procedure, is performed by FCT before the evaluation process begins.

## Article 19

### **Support elements for the evaluation**

1. In the first phase, the evaluation procedure begins via registration of the Unit referred to in article 17 and the information provided by the R&D unit in the application form submitted on the FCT website, within the deadlines established by the official announcements in article 16.
2. In the second phase, the evaluation procedure includes a site visit to the R&D unit or meetings with the coordinators, researchers and other team members for discussion and clarification of the submitted items and/or preliminary evaluation reports.

## Article 20

### **Notice of the first phase evaluation proposal**

Within fifteen working days of receipt of the consensus evaluation reports, FCT advises R&D units about the evaluation proposal and, whenever applicable, of the funding proposal together with evaluators' reviews for:

- a) Prior hearing of interested parties, in accordance with article 22 of this regulation, for R&D units with proposed evaluations of "Good", "Fair" and "Poor";
- b) Review and comment to R&D units for which the evaluation will be completed in the second phase.

## Article 21

### **Notice of the second phase evaluation proposal**

1. Within thirty working days after receipt of the evaluation panels' final reports, FCT advises the R&D unit of the evaluation proposal and, whenever appropriate, of the proposal for funding, together with the evaluators' reviews.
2. Once the R&D unit accepts the evaluators' decision, it must formalise the acceptance within ten working days via the FCT website and also proceed with the necessary budget amendments if the proposed budget is lower than the one presented in the initial proposal.

## Article 22

### **Prior hearing**

1. After notification of the evaluator's decision, in accordance with paragraph a) of article 20 and subsection 1 of article 21, the R&D unit may give its opinion on pertinent points within ten working days.
2. The comments presented in the prior hearing should be substantiated and are assessed as follows:
  - a) By FCT, with regards to procedural and administrative issues or



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**b)** By evaluation panels, with regards to scientific issues.

**3.** The evaluation panel may, where appropriate, consult experts referred in paragraph b) of article 10.

**4.** Administrative or procedural observations as well as scientific observations are submitted simultaneously on the FCT website.

## Article 23

### Complaints

**1.** Following notice of the decision, complaint claims should be addressed to the FCT Board, within fifteen working days.

**2.** Analysis of the complaint claim on scientific issues is carried out by a second panel of independent experts, who may recommend the maintenance or modification of the decision regarding the periodic evaluation and regarding the funds to be allocated.

**3.** The existence of gross errors or negligent acts which cause harm to the units involved constitute enough grounds for reversal of the decision of the evaluation panel.

**4.** FCT notifies the R&D unit about the final decision of the complaint after completion of the above-mentioned procedures.



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## CHAPTER V

# Monitoring

### Article 24

#### Mid-term review

1. R&D units evaluated under this regulation may be subject of to a mid-term review, three years after the completion of the periodic evaluation process, without prejudice of evaluations occurring in exceptional circumstances.
2. A mid-term review is carried out by evaluation panels that are as similar as possible to the panels involved in the periodic evaluation.
3. Depending on the results of the mid-term reviews or reviews under exceptional circumstances, amendments to the initial evaluation decision may occur.

### Article 25

#### Evaluation of new R&D units

1. R&D units which have been created *ex novo* after the periodic evaluation process may apply as candidates to a new evaluation procedure.
2. The evaluation exercise referred in the previous number, may be performed simultaneously and in parallel with the mid-term review, and is subject to the present regulation.

### Article 26

#### Progress and final reports

1. R&D units should submit annual progress scientific reports and a final scientific report of the strategic programme that was approved for funding on the FCT website, for monitoring purposes.
2. Scientific progress reports should briefly describe the work performed, the results obtained and deviations from the proposed work programme or the approved budget.
3. The final scientific report should describe, in detail, the execution of the work performed during the defined period of time as well as the main contributions of the team to the advancement of knowledge, indicating publications and other outcomes of the work programme.
4. In the final scientific report, access to publications and other results should be made available, preferably through open access. Whenever appropriate, publications should be made available through specific URLs or through PDF files transferred to the FCT servers.



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- 5.** FCT may limit the volume and type of documents that are uploaded - it is the responsibility of the institution to select the most significant documents to upload, making the remaining documents available through a separate website.
- 6.** Scientific reports, progress and final reports should be submitted on the FCT website within thirty calendar days of completion of the activities of each year and also after completion of the strategic programme, in case of the final report.
- 7.** The final financial report, prepared by FCT after analysis of eligible expenditure throughout the work programme and made available on the FCT website, should be validated by the R&D unit within ten calendar days after its release.
- 8.** The reports referred to in the preceding paragraphs may be assessed by monitoring committees, composed mainly by international experts, which may recommend suspension or cancellation of funding.



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## CHAPTER VI

# Transitional and final provisions

### Article 27

#### **Concepts**

1. The present regulation considers concepts included in the documents supporting the evaluation process.
2. Provisions in the preceding item do not prejudice the specific organic compositions resulting from procedures directly applicable to each R&D unit.

### Article 28

#### **Revocation**

The Pluriannual Funding Programme of R&D Units, approved in 2007, is hereby revoked.

### Article 29

#### **Omissions**

Omissions shall be addressed by FCT, in compliance to the principles and norms contained within applicable EU or national legislation.

### Article 30

#### **Entry into Force**

This regulation shall enter into force on the day following its publication.





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[www.fct.pt](http://www.fct.pt)