

GUIDE TO FRIA JURIES

Adopted by the FRIA Board of Trustees on 24th April 2023

COMPOSITION OF JURIES

The FRIA Board of Trustees appoints members of the juries upon the proposal of the F.R.S.-FNRS Guidance Committee (COMA).

Members are appointed for a term of one year, renewable 4 times. Their mandate is awarded on personal basis and may be renewed after a 2- year period of vacancy.

The FRIA has adopted 20 subject areas corresponding to the 20 LS and PE panels of the ERC (European Research Council). These subject areas are identified in a list of ERC descriptor fields complemented by F.R.S.-FNRS keywords reflecting certain specificities of research in the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB).

The list including the **20 subject areas** is the following:

- **LS1:** Molecular biology, biochemistry, structural biology, molecular biophysics, synthetic and chemical biology, drug design, innovative methods and modelling
- **LS2:** Genetics, epigenetics, genomics and other 'omics studies, bioinformatics, systems biology, genetic diseases, gene editing, innovative methods and modelling, 'omics for personalised medicine
- **LS3:** Structure and function of the cell, cell-cell communication, embryogenesis, tissue differentiation, organogenesis, growth, development, evolution of development, organoids, stem cells, regeneration, therapeutic approaches
- **LS4:** Organ and tissue physiology, comparative physiology, physiology of ageing, pathophysiology, interorgan and tissue communication, endocrinology, nutrition, metabolism, interaction with the microbiome, non-communicable diseases including cancer (and except disorders of the nervous system and immunity-related diseases)
- **LS5:** Nervous system development, homeostasis and ageing, nervous system function and dysfunction, systems neuroscience and modelling, biological basis of cognitive processes and of behaviour, neurological and mental disorders
- **LS6:** The immune system, related disorders and their mechanisms, biology of infectious agents and infection, biological basis of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, innovative immunological tools and approaches, including therapies
- **LS7:** Medical technologies and tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of human diseases, therapeutic approaches and interventions, preventative medicine, epidemiology and public health, digital medicine, medical ethics
- **LS8:** Ecology, biodiversity, environmental change, evolutionary biology, behavioural ecology, microbial ecology, marine biology, ecophysiology, theoretical developments and modelling
- **LS9:** Biotechnology using all organisms, biotechnology for environment and food applications, applied plant and animal sciences, bioengineering and synthetic biology, biomass and biofuels, biohazards
- **PE1:** All areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics
- **PE2:** Particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics
- **PE3:** Structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences, biological physics
- **PE4:** Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics

- **PE5:** New materials and new synthetic approaches, structure-properties relations, solid state chemistry, molecular architecture, organic chemistry¹
- **PE6:** Informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems
- **PE7:** Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering
- **PE8:** Product and process design, chemical, civil, environmental, mechanical, vehicle engineering, energy processes and relevant computational methods
- **PE9:** Astro-physics/-chemistry/-biology; solar system; planetary systems; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy; cosmology; space sciences; astronomical instrumentation and data
- **PE10:** Physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, cryology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management
- **PE11:** Advanced materials development: performance enhancement, modelling, large-scale preparation, modification, tailoring, optimisation, novel and combined use of materials, etc.

Several juries may be built around the same subject area, depending on the number of applicants.

Each jury is composed of 1 non-academic member from a research center or an expert from the industry sector, along with 6 to 8 members from CFB universities, ensuring representation among the universities:

- 2 UCLouvain, 2 ULB, 2 ULiège,
- 1 UMons and/or 1 UNamur, depending on the field concerned.

POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (COI)

Every member who:

- is a (co-)promoter of an applicant → may not, even partially, sit on the jury in charge of interviewing the applicant
- has a direct family relationship with an applicant/a (co-)promoter → may not, even partially, sit on the jury in charge of interviewing the applicant
- holds/has held a hierarchic or directly subordinate position during the last 3 years with regard to an applicant/a (co-)promoter → leaves the meeting during the evaluation of the application file in question
- is cited as a reference person in the application file submitted by the applicant → leaves the meeting during the evaluation of the application file in question
- has supervised the Master thesis of an applicant as a (co-)promoter → leaves the meeting during the evaluation of the application file in question

¹ Since the 2019 FRIA call, given the correspondence between PE3 and PE5 subject areas, PE5-jury 2 has been broadened, henceforth including members whose descriptor fields also cover PE3 subject area.

- is referenced in the applicant's application file as a collaborator → depending on the contribution of the member, s/he should leave the meeting with regard to the application file, or should not, even partially, sit on the jury in charge of interviewing the applicant
- has/had an active collaboration with an applicant/(co-)promoter in the last 3 years (co-publication, common research projects, ...) → leaves the meeting during the evaluation of the application file in question

Every member who leaves the session while the jury is interviewing the applicant shall refrain from commenting, participating and voting during the final ranking.

PRESIDENCY AND VICE-PRESIDENCY

Presidents and vice-presidents are appointed by the FRIA Board of Trustees upon collegiate proposal of members of the jury who shall recommend 2 "candidates" from different academic or non-academic institutions. The FRIA Board of Trustees shall make the final decision while respecting gender balance and institutions distribution for all juries as possible.

The duration of mandate of President and Vice-president can not exceed 3 years, it takes into account all previous years spent as President/Vice-president and is associated to the duration of mandate as a member within the jury.

The President shall not be entrusted with any rapporteur assignment, except in cases of force majeure.

When the President of the jury is prevented from attending, the functions of President of the jury shall be exercised by the Vice-president.

VALIDATION OF THE SUBJECT AREA AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE FILES BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT JURIES OF A SUBJECT AREA

The choice of subject area by the applicant will be accepted or denied by the Presidents of juries, as long as they don't come from the same university as the applicant (in which case a Vice-president will be in charge of this procedure).

When there are more than one jury in the subject area of the [jury](#) chosen by the applicant, the FRIA reserves the right to transfer the applicant to another jury, taking into account the number of applicants and the management of potential conflicts of interest. If necessary, the FRIA may transfer the applicant to another jury when their (co-)promoter is a member of the jury.

HOW JURIES WORK

For the evaluation, each application file is assigned to a rapporteur selected among members of the jury by the President. The rapporteur shall be from an institution different from the applicant. For applicants from the same institution as the President, application files are assigned by the Vice-president.

Prior to their meetings, jury's members will have access to all the application files, except files for which they have reported a conflict of interest (COI). The President shall undertake the functions of a rapporteur who is unable to exercise their duties.

The F.R.S.-FNRS insists on strict compliance with the instructions given for each part of the proposal (scientific section relevant to the instrument selected, number of pages allowed for the documents to be enclosed with the application form...) and stresses again the sovereign consideration of the juries assessing the application file.

Each rapporteur shall draw a report and submit it on the [e-space](#) secured platform prior to the jury's session.

This report shall be communicated to members of the jury at the start of the meeting and will serve as a basis for the interview. Additions will be made to the report in light of the conduct of the interview. To respect the European Charter for Researchers, final version of the report will serve as the evaluation report communicated to the applicant, including the final grade given by the jury after the applicant is interviewed.

Juries shall devote 30 minutes at most to each applicant.
The oral presentation of the applicant shall not exceed 10 minutes.
Following the interview, the jury shall debate and give a grade to the applicant in the absence of the applicant.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria taken into account for the evaluation of the FRIA applications are the following:

CRITERIA
Quality of the research project: Feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan, and activities report (applicable only for applicants to a 1 st Grant 2 nd Year)
Skills of the applicant with respect to their speciality (CV)
Presentation and answers given to questions about the project
Scientific knowledge in general

The evaluation grid is the following:

Categories	Grades	
A	A+	outstanding
	A	excellent
	A-	very good
B	B+	good
	B	average
	B-	weak
C	C	insufficient

The jury shall rank the applicants. The ranking is adopted and agreed by "consensus". If the consensus cannot be reached, the jury shall proceed to a vote excluding members facing a conflict of interest.

For applicants to a 1st Grant, juries will assess their capability to conduct their doctoral research in 4 years. Depending on the progress of the research work, juries may decide to recommend applicants whether for a 1st Grant 1st year or 1st Grant 2nd year.

LABELLING OF LAUREATES PROJECTS BY THE WALLOON REGION

The jury shall assess the application potential of the research program and the "Industry and Agriculture" approach, and shall give its opinion accordingly.

To that end, the jury shall identify one or several [domain\(s\)/theme\(s\) considered a priority](#) and approved by the Walloon government.

After the juries met, the FRIA shall discuss and make a selection with a Walloon Region representative (appointed by the Minister whose responsibilities include the scientific research matters) among proposals preliminary identified by the juries being deemed to be "labelled" by the Walloon Region.

After the FRIA Board of Trustees decided on granting, the definite list shall be submitted to the Minister in charge for approval, to be supported by the subsidies provided by the Walloon Region.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of natural language processors, large language models, or other generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the evaluation work of remote experts and/or members of juries is prohibited. No data (whether personal or not) may be processed using these tools.

DATA PROTECTION

The F.R.S-FNRS expects certain standards regarding data management when allocating a proposal for assessment by an expert. Therefore, the funds invites each expert to read the [information notice](#).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any support document, tool, database, program, or written material submitted in any format and media whatsoever to the jury for the conduct of the evaluation is considered to be strictly confidential.