

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

### **FRESH (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH FUND)**

### **DOCTORAL GRANTS**

### **ADOPTED BY**

### **THE F.R.S.-FNRS BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Référence** : **FRS-FNRS\_REGL\_FRESH\_BD\_EN\_CA20251209\_2025.12.11\_22\_Final**

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## CHAPTER I: SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE GRANT

### Article 1

The rules and regulations hereinafter are only applicable to holders of a FRESH grant from the Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS).

The FRESH Fund supports basic research projects whose outcomes are likely to improve the understanding or functioning of one sector in the society in the short-medium term at a local, regional, national or international level, from many perspectives such as culture, economy, politics, sociology and psychosociology.

The granting of a FRESH grant is intended for the completion of the Ph.D. within 4 years. People with disabilities are allowed to complete their Ph.D. working part time over up to six years, if it has been agreed upon with the promoter.

### Article 2

FRESH grants are strictly restricted for holders of an academic degree who aim to carry out fundamental research projects with significant societal impact, using tools provided by human and social sciences. For this purpose, they shall pursue their studies leading to a Ph.D. in a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium under the supervision of a promoter and a postdoctoral co-promoter (if any) from one of the institutions listed in [Appendix 1](#).

The promoter must meet the following conditions altogether:

- Be permanently appointed<sup>1</sup> to an academic or scientific position or on probation in that university.
- This appointment must have a final and conclusive assent from the competent body to legitimize this appointment in accordance with the Law or the university regulations by the time of the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) at the latest.
- This academic or scientific position must be effective by the time of the starting date of the grant, i.e., by 1<sup>st</sup> October of the year of the FRESH Call concerned at the latest.

If the promoter of a FRESH applicant who is appointed permanently accesses the legal age of retirement / becomes professor emeritus after the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) and before the end of the funding scheme in case of granting, the submission of the application shall be subject to prior approval by the Head of institution where the research will be carried out.

The promoter permanently appointed who will access the legal age of retirement / become professor emeritus by the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) is not eligible.

The researcher-promoter of a Ulysse Incentive Grant for Mobility in Scientific Research (MISU) who genuinely carries out the fellowship by the time of the starting date of the grant, i.e., by 1<sup>st</sup> October of the year of the FRESH Call concerned at the latest, may be promoter of an applicant to a FRESH Grant.

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<sup>1</sup> Research logisticians of rank A, as defined by the Royal Decree of 31<sup>st</sup> October 1953 fixing 'le statut des agrégés, des répétiteurs et des membres du personnel scientifique des universités de l'État', are not eligible as promoters of doctoral grants.

## CHAPTER II: CANDIDACY AND DURATION OF THE GRANT

### Article 3

FRESH Grants are accessible to holders of one of the following degrees:

-1° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the French-speaking Community of Belgium;

-2° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the Dutch-speaking Community of Belgium, German-speaking Community of Belgium or from the Royal Military Academy.

-3° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania<sup>2</sup>.

-4° Any degree as referred to in Article 115 of the Decree of 7 November 2013 of the French-speaking Community of Belgium that defines the landscape of Higher Education and the academic studies organisation.

Applicants who hold a degree as referred to in paragraph 1, 1°, 2° and 3° are required to provide a certificate of achievement or a copy of the diploma. The document must be enclosed in the application file by 30<sup>th</sup> September of the year the application is submitted at the latest.

Applicants who hold a degree as referred to in paragraph 1, 4° are required to provide a registration document or a certificate that enables the admission to doctoral programmes issued by the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium where the studies will be carried out along with a certificate of achievement or a copy of all degrees. Both documents must be enclosed in the application file by 30<sup>th</sup> September of the year the application is submitted at the latest.

### Article 4

Applicants to a FRESH grant must have obtained an academic degree as referred to in Article 3 for maximum 7 years, provided that this period is completed between 1<sup>st</sup> October of year N-1 and 30<sup>th</sup> September of year N (given that year N is the year of the FRESH call in question).

The maximum period used to calculate eligibility based on the required academic seniority is extended by:

- 15 months per childbirth regardless of the number of children per delivery
- 12 months per child for whom the applicant is a parent<sup>3</sup> (as a legal parent, co-parent, adoptive mother or father, adoptive co-parent, or any other form of legal parenthood established by recognition or court decision) and whom the applicant did not give birth to;

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Brussels Treaty on the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications between the Benelux countries and the Baltic States, which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

<sup>3</sup> In case of multiple pregnancy, the non-birthing parent will have their eligibility extension capped at 12 months.

- 12 months for applicants who have taken in one or more children at the same time as foster parents<sup>4</sup>, designated as such by the court, by an accredited placement service of the competent community, or by a community service responsible for youth protection (youth welfare services, Special Youth Assistance Committee), in the context of a long-term placement.

These extensions are cumulative.

#### Article 5

Ph.D. researchers can be granted successively with a grant twice maximum. The maximum duration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant is 27 months. The maximum duration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant is 21 months.

The duration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant may be reduced to 15 months if the applicant applies to a FRESH Grant after one year of Ph.D.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant can be allocated for less than 21 months but for a minimum term of 15 months.

For people with disabilities, the maximum duration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant is 39 months. The maximum duration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant is 33 months. The duration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant may be reduced to 27 months if the applicant applies to a FRESH Grant after one year of Ph.D. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant can be allocated for less than 33 months but for a minimum term of 27 months.

#### Article 6

No applicant may apply for a FRESH and FRIA Grant during the same year.

No applicant may apply more than twice to a FRESH Grant.

No applicant who has previously applied to a 1<sup>st</sup> grant 2<sup>nd</sup> year may apply to a FRESH Grant, irrespective of whether the choice is made by:

- Applicants themselves when they apply (either they applied the previous year for a 1<sup>st</sup> grant 1<sup>st</sup> year or they worked full-time on their Ph.D. thesis);
- Or the jury which interviewed them, as per the [guide to juries](#).

Researchers who have been granted with a FRESH Grant, regardless of its duration, can no longer apply for such grant.

No interruption may be possible between grants.

No applicant may apply for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant if they have not been granted with a 1<sup>st</sup> Grant.

FRESH Applicants who have not been granted with a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant are not allowed to apply for anymore.

Grantees may have their grant revoked as soon as they do no longer meet the granting terms and conditions.

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of fostering siblings, the concerned parent will have their eligibility extension capped at 12 months.

No applicant may apply for a FRESH Grant if they successively received two Research Fellow fellowships (ASP + ASP-REN) of the F.R.S.-FNRS or two FRIA grants (1<sup>st</sup> + 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant).

#### Article 7

The call for FRESH applications is opened once a year and is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

**Only one application for a 1<sup>st</sup> Grant** can be submitted, in French or in English. It must only be submitted on [e-space](#), the online platform dedicated to the calls for proposals.

**Applicants to a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant** are given access to the electronic form by the FRESH on [e-space](#).

**Both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant applications** are submitted to a procedure including three successive electronic validations on the dates that will be indicated when the call is published:

- a) The validation by the applicant: it accounts as a confirmation that the applicant has submitted an application.
- b) The validation by the promoter selected pursuant to article 2: the F.R.S.-FNRS transfers the application to promoters so that they give their approval for the submitted research project and confirm the accuracy of data mentioned in the application file. The promoter may accept or refuse the application.
- c) The validation by the research administration (or Board of Education) of the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, to which the application file is transferred once promoters have given their consent. The academic authority may accept or refuse the application. The validation deadline fixed for the rectors puts a final end to the call for proposals.

Applications that have not been validated within the time-frame of the call cannot be taken into account.

**No further change or modification** to the proposal can be made after the validation deadline set for the applicant.

A mini-guide specifies the validation dates as well as the documents which must be included in the application.

#### Article 8

**Applicants to a FRESH 1<sup>st</sup> Grant** are required to take an oral examination. This oral examination takes place at the F.R.S.-FNRS and is based on the research project (feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan and activities report, if applicable), the applicant's profile with regard to their speciality (C.V.), their presentation and the answers given to questions regarding their research project, and their scientific knowledge in general.

Members of juries who evaluate the applicants are selected by the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees, upon the proposal of the Guidance Committee (COMA).

The FRESH requires the promoter and one additional professor or holder of Research Associate (CQ)/Senior Research Associate (MR)/Research Director (DR)<sup>5</sup> fellowship of the F.R.S.-FNRS to give their opinion concerning the profile of applicants to a 1<sup>st</sup> Grant.

**FRESH 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant renewal** applications are examined by the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee).

The Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee) must complete a document which shall be attached to the electronic form for a Renewal application. This document must be duly completed and signed and sent to the research unit (or Board of Education) of the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium in order to be signed by the academic authorities. The latter must send the document to the FRESH by **31<sup>st</sup> October** of the year the application is submitted.

When the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium takes the ultimate decision for the applicant not to further continue doctoral studies and when the Rector notifies the FRESH in writing, the FRESH grant will expire at the end of the ongoing grant.

## CHAPTER III: ALLOCATION OF THE GRANT

### Article 9

1<sup>st</sup> Grants are allocated by the FRESH Board of Trustees in accordance with Article 9.

2<sup>nd</sup> Grants are allocated by the FRESH Board of Trustees upon the positive recommendation of the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee).

### Article 10

FRESH 1<sup>st</sup> Grant Scheme starts on 1<sup>st</sup> October. The starting date may be postponed upon a duly justified request to the FRESH.

If the FRESH accepts a starting date for a grant running beyond 1<sup>st</sup> October<sup>6</sup>, the grant will be postponed by the number of months between 1<sup>st</sup> October and the actual starting date of the grant year, up to a maximum of 4 months (which means an actual starting date of no later than 31<sup>st</sup> January). No extension will be granted if the starting date of the grant is later than 1<sup>st</sup> February of the year following the grant year.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Grant scheme starts as from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January.

## CHAPTER IV: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF FRESH GRANTEES

### Article 11

Any research project being funded must observe statutory provisions in force governing ethics.

### Article 12

FRESH Grantees are subordinated to the FRESH Board of Trustees, which acts through its President and the General Secretary of the F.R.S.-FNRS. They pledge to respect the rules and regulations in force within the Fund.

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<sup>5</sup> *Chercheuse qualifiée / Chercheur qualifié - Research Associate (CQ), Maître de recherches - Senior Research Associate (MR) or Directrice de recherches / Directeur de recherches - Research Director (DR).*

<sup>6</sup> *Applies to the grants awarded from the 2024 call.*

They must respect the discipline enforced by the academic authority of the institution where they work and observe its rules and regulations. As grantees of the F.R.S.-FNRS, they are also required to adhere to the regulation on the property, protection and promotion of the results from the research carried out within the institution.

#### Article 13

FRESH Grantees shall not take on any teaching position.

They must obtain a doctoral training certificate or get exempted from it in accordance with the Decree of 7 November 2013 and the specific provisions enacted in the doctoral regulations in force within the hosting institution.

Administrative work or tasks relating to didactic supervision within the host institution may be assigned to FRESH Grantees up to four hours per week on an annual average.

Since the FRESH grant aims at carrying out an original dissertation to obtain the title of Doctor, grantees shall not take any other exams than qualifying exams as part of their doctoral training and/or any additional training accredited by the relevant academic authority in their hosting institution.

#### Article 14

FRESH Grantees may not be a member of the scientific or academic staff in a university or an academic institution and may not receive any remuneration or salary.

However, the FRESH may, upon request, authorise them to receive full or part of the allowances that they may be entitled to have to study abroad.

FRESH Grantees may not carry out any professional activity and may not receive any remuneration or salary.

#### Article 15

FRESH Grantees receive an operating credit, which is under the responsibility of their promoter.

The operating credit can only be allocated if the holder genuinely carries out the fellowship.

#### Article 16

Grantees are required to provide reports on their research work at the end of each grant scheme and upon any request from the General Secretary of the F.R.S.-FNRS.

FRESH Grantees are required to upload on their personal [e-space](#) page **a report** based on their doctoral work along with their publications list **by 31<sup>st</sup> August** following the allocation of their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grants, at the latest.

#### Article 17

FRESH Grantees shall mention in their publications, papers and reprinted/e-print alike that they have been granted with a FRESH grant.

#### Article 18

FRESH Grantees who wish to study or pursue their research abroad must give prior notice to the FRESH on their personal [e-space](#) page at least 15 days before the actual date of departure.

For any stay, a prior agreement of the promoter must be sent to the FRESH and uploaded on e-space.

In case of a long-term stay (90 days or more), an agreement of the Head of the institution where the FRESH grantee carries out their research must also be submitted to the FRESH on e-space by the institution.

#### Article 19

Any change regarding the civil status, the family responsibility, the domicile or residence must be reported by the holder of a FRESH grant on their personal [e-space](#) page, as soon as possible.

#### Article 20

FRESH Grantees shall inform the FRESH of any interruption or suspension of their scientific activities as soon as they can and for any reason whatsoever.

#### Article 21

In case of illness or personal accident, a medical certificate attesting the starting date and the duration or extension of a period of professional incapacity must be submitted to the FRESH within 48 hours following the beginning of the incapacity period. The promoter shall send a copy of the medical certificate to the relevant department of the institution where the grantee carries out her/his research.

#### Article 22

In case of work accident, the administrative staff of the FRESH must be informed within 24 hours, by phone if necessary. The declaration of accident as well as the medical certificate establishing the accident must be sent to the Fund. The health department of the institution where the grantee carries out her/his research must be informed as well.

## **CHAPTER V: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS**

#### Article 23

Grant amounts are determined once a year within the limit of the budget of the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

The amount of the grant is mentioned on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

FRESH Grantees shall give written notice to the FRESH of the date of their Ph.D. thesis dissertation and send a copy of their certificate of achievement to the secretariat of the FRESH.

One month after being graduated with a Ph.D., the grant amount of the FRESH grantee is increased in the same proportion that the scale for assistant professors who obtained their Ph.D.

#### Article 24

The FRESH grant is exempt from tax on income. The grant beneficiary is nonetheless subject to the employee social security scheme.

The FRESH grant is a fixed amount which includes holidays. FRESH grantees therefore do not depend on the private sector holiday legislation thus receive no holiday bonus.

#### Article 25

Grantees shall be remunerated on a monthly basis, in arrears.

For 1<sup>st</sup> Grant beneficiaries granted in December of the Year X with effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October of the Year X (see article 10), allocation of the grants due in October, November and December of the Year X will be made at the beginning of the Year X+1 in one instalment.

The grant is paid on a SEPA ("Single Euro Payments Area") euro bank account of their choice.

Any change of bank account number must be reported online by the FRESH Grantee on their personal [e-space](#) page.

## **CHAPTER VI: WORK ACCIDENTS**

### Article 26

FRESH Grantees are covered by an insurance contract as required by the law. This contract covers ordinary work risks during seminars or in laboratory as well as risks of accidents occurring on their way to work.

It also covers the risks incurred during temporary missions in Belgium and abroad. FRESH Grantees may travel by any common transportation (sea, air or road transport) authorised for people transportation, inasmuch as they are not members of the crew.

## **CHAPTER VII: INTERRUPTION DUE TO MATERNITY, PATERNITY OR ADOPTION LEAVE**

### Article 27

The FRESH grant interrupted due to maternity, paternity or adoption leave can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

The extension request must be reported at least one month before the grant expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

### Article 28

During the maternity, paternity or adoption leave, the FRESH Grantee receives a replacement income paid by the mutual insurance company as from the time set by the law regarding sickness and invalidity insurance. In that case, the payment of the remuneration is immediately suspended.

To that end, FRESH Grantees shall give prior notice to their promoter and the FRESH of the starting date of their leave.

The Fund gives the FRESH Grantee in the situation mentioned above an extra payment to the indemnity provided by the mutual insurance company in order to compensate for the loss of income.

To that end, FRESH Grantees must provide the Fund with a certificate issued by the health care insurer (the mutual insurance company), mentioning both gross and net amounts of the maternity, paternity or adoption indemnity that they have received.

## CHAPITRE VIII: INTERRUPTION FOR PROPHYLACTIC ANTENATAL LEAVE, PROPHYLACTIC BREASTFEEDING LEAVE OR BREASTFEEDING LEAVE FOR PERSONAL CONVENIENCE

### Article 29

The FRESH grant interrupted due to a prophylactic antenatal leave, prophylactic breastfeeding leave and breastfeeding leave for personal convenience can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

The FRESH grant must request this extension at least a month before the fellowship expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

This extension will be granted upon reception of a medical certificate.

Prophylactic breastfeeding leave or breastfeeding leave for personal convenience cannot exceed 5 months from the day of the birth.

### Article 30

During the prophylactic antenatal leave or the prophylactic breastfeeding leave, the FRESH grantees receive a replacement income paid by the mutual insurance company as from the time set by the law regarding sickness and invalidity insurance. In that case, the payment of the remuneration is immediately suspended.

To that end, the FRESH grantees shall give prior notice of the starting date of their leave to their promoter and the F.R.S.-FNRS.

The Fund gives the FRESH grantees in the aforementioned situation an extra payment to the indemnity provided by the mutual insurance company in order to compensate for the loss of income.

To that end, the FRESH grantees must provide the Fund with a certificate issued by the health care insurer (the mutual insurance company), mentioning the received amount of the prophylactic leave indemnity.

## CHAPTER IX: SUSPENSION DUE TO PARENTAL LEAVE

### Article 31

The FRESH grant interrupted due to parental leave can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

A parental leave request must contain a letter from the promoter defining the modalities of the leave (form and period...).

The FRESH grant must request this extension at least a month before the grant expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

## CHAPTER X: SUSPENSION DUE TO ILLNESS FOR ONE MONTH OR MORE

### Article 32

**For recipients who obtained their grant before 2026**, the FRESH grant interrupted for 30 days or more due to illness shall be extended for a period equal to that of the interruption.

**For recipients who obtained their grant from 2026 on**, the FRESH grant interrupted for 30 days or more due to illness shall be extended for a period equal to that of the interruption. The 30 first days of the interruption, which are paid by the FRESH, are not included in the extension of the grant.

This extension will be granted upon receipt of a medical certificate justifying the work incapacity for a period greater than 30 days.

The extension of the FRESH grant will be effective when the researcher returns to work, by signing a formal contract amendment stating the new ending date of the fellowship. The researcher will be required to send it to the FRESH for approval.

#### Article 33

Beyond the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the guaranteed remuneration, the FRESH will not pay allowance in addition to illness benefit from the social insurance.

## **CHAPTER XI: ANNUAL LEAVE**

#### Article 34

The duration of the annual leave is equivalent to the calendar fixed in the hosting institution's rules of procedure. Periods of time are set by mutual agreement with the promoter. FRESH Grantees shall inform the FRESH Secretariat of their holiday dates.

## **CHAPTER XII: FINAL PROVISIONS**

#### Article 35

FRESH Grantees may terminate their grant agreement at any time. They shall give a written notice of their decision to the FRESH, their promoter and the head of the institution where they have carried out their research programme.

#### Article 36

Only holders of a FRESH grant whose disability has been recognized by the General Management for People with disabilities ("Direction Générale Personnes handicapées"), at the Social Security service, part of the Federal Public Service, can request the adjustments allowed by article 1.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Relevant Institutions for the co-promoter

Instrument: FRESH Grant

FRESH Cal

**Bourse FRESH / FRESH Grant**

<p><b>Co-promoteur rice d'une université CFB / Co-promoter of a CFB university</b></p>	<p>➤ <b>Universités de la Communauté française de Belgique (CFB)</b> <b>Universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB)</b></p> <p>Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Université de Liège (ULiège) Université de Mons (UMons) Université de Namur (UNamur)</p>
<p><b>Co-promoteur rice (de régime linguistique francophone) attaché e à l'une de ces institutions / French speaking co-promoter attached to one of these institutions</b></p>	<p>➤ <b>Établissements scientifiques fédéraux</b> <b>State Scientific Institutions</b></p> <p>Archives de l'État (AE) Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (I.R.P.A.) KBR (Bibliothèque royale de Belgique) Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (M.R.A.C.) Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (M.R.A.H.) Musées royaux des Beaux-arts de Belgique (M.R.B.A.B.)</p> <p>➤ Musée royal de Mariemont</p> <p>➤ Sciensano</p>