PHD FELLOWSHIP: scoring descriptors criterion “Candidate” (preselection)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Fair/Reasonable</th>
<th>Good/Very good</th>
<th>Excellent/Outstanding</th>
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<td>1 / C</td>
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<td>3 / B</td>
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<td>4 / B+</td>
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<td>5 / A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 / A+</td>
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1.a. Study results (academic education)

Depending on whether the master studies are already concluded, master or bachelor percentiles (referring to their university study group) are to be provided by the candidates. In addition, detailed course scores should be added. Bachelor percentiles in particular should, if possible, be complemented by intermediate master study results. Students from non-Flemish universities should provide either a percentile score (if available), or at least their rank within their study group. Candidates may refer to other evidence of having distinguished themselves during their studies. One may refer to upward trends during course of education, particular situations that may have influenced the study trajectory; also to results of additional studies/diplomas, (bachelor or) master thesis score, specific classes successfully attended, or other specific assets. The scoring based on the provided percentiles should therefore be well framed and fine-tuned with all available info and evidence. Also, percentiles referring to small study groups should be carefully dealt with.

No scoring possibility

The study results do not stand out (may be at the head of the pack within study group, but below average in the applicants population).

☐ (e.g.) <P70 for relevant master diploma, and no other evidence of standing out;

OR

☐ master students: (e.g.) <P80 for bachelor, and lack of other evidence of distinguishing elements, such as partial master results.

Rather good study results, situated well above average and at the subtop in the study group, as evidenced by:

☐ (e.g.) ≥P70 for relevant master diploma, or other evidence;

OR

☐ master students: e.g. bachelor (e.g.) ≥P80 (and confirmed by intermediate master study results) or equivalent.

(Very) good academic education record situated in the (broad) top of the study group, as evidenced by:

☐ (e.g.) P85 for relevant master diploma, or even P90 (A-). Other evidence may apply.

OR

☐ master students: (e.g.) bachelor ≥P90 (confirmed by intermediate master study results), or other evidence.

Top student with an excellent /outstanding academic education record, as evidenced by:

☐ (e.g.) P95, or even top 1% (A+), for relevant master diploma Other evidence of excellence may apply.

OR

☐ master students: (e.g.) P95 bachelor with proven top start of master studies, or other evidence.
1.b. Motivation and substantiation of relevant competences of the candidate

In their “motivation statement”, applicants should substantiate acquired competences (expertise and skills), and present a credible approach to further improve skills and acquire missing competences if any. Relevant competences (expertise and skills) imply the proper scientific background to start the PhD project, as well as e.g. experimental skills, presentation or writing skills, international contacts, commitment/perseverance, that may have been acquired during the candidate’s academic education, master thesis or extracurricular activities (academic or non-academic). Proven scientific seniority (post Master) may also be taken into account as well as scientific recognition (prizes, publications, …), international mobility, …

No scoring possibility

- Expertise and skills apparently not in line with what should be expected from PhD student. Some crucial competences are missing.
- One or more of the following items apply:
  - Candidate may not fully be motivated or prepared to start a research career. Evidence of some specific competences is missing. How these competences will be acquired is less well substantiated;
  - candidate has started PhD research but with little evidence of progress made (incl. competences acquired)...
- One or more of the following items apply:
  - Relevant competences and clear motivation likely are present and well substantiated (e.g. master or bachelor thesis) or some competences missing but a clear and credible plan is provided on how to acquire the proper skills;
  - candidate has started PhD research with proper intermediate results and development of new competences as a researcher.
- Requirements as in “good”, AND
  - the candidate has substantiated to have actively acquired all proper competences to successfully conduct PhD research. Clear plan to further enhance these capacities. Reveals clear motivation and drive.
PHD FELLOWSHIP: scoring descriptors criterion “Project” (preselection + interview)

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### 2.a Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality

A PhD project is scientifically challenging and relies on a proper and focused research question. It should significantly contribute to the current international state-of-the-art. To what extent is the proposal original and will it generate knowledge that goes beyond the state-of-the-art (e.g., novel theories, concepts or approaches, new methods, ...)?

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - The project is **out of scope**: it does not comply with the scope of the panel it was submitted to. (preselection only)
  - The project lacks an intellectual (PhD-worthy) challenge: an in-depth research question is missing.

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - Research question and challenge limited or less relevant,
  - the research objectives lack focus. PhD worthiness is on the low side,
  - the project is rather a catch-up effort relative to the state-of-the-art.

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - Scientifically relevant project, rather high quality, and sufficiently challenging as PhD-research. The research is less well focused;
  - the project brings less pronounced added value to international state-of-the-art.

- **All of the following items apply:**
  - Original and significant contribution to the international state of the art;
  - high-quality basic research, with significant scientific challenges (doctoral level).

### 2.b Quality of the research methodology and feasibility of the project

To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals laid down in the research project? To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible, bearing in mind a personal grant with a duration of four years? Finally the fit in the research team may be of importance (guidance and access to expertise).

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - Quality of research approach and planning is below par;
  - Research activities are too limited for a four-year grant period;
  - Project not feasible because of too many planned activities.

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - Methodology and planning are flawed. Intrinsic feasibility is low, or the objectives are formulated too vaguely to evaluate feasibility.
  - Project does not fit to an individual PhD project.
  - Ties with/dependence of other researchers, groups or external partners may jeopardize feasibility.

- **One or more of the following items apply:**
  - Research methodology reasonably well elaborated, but less well substantiated. Given some adjustments and risk control, project implementation appears to be feasible.

- **All of the following items apply:**
  - Adequate, substantiated research methodology to achieve targeted results, logical set-up and realistic planning: feasible within the four-year time frame.
  - Good fit of project in research group activities, giving candidate access to necessary expertise.

**Requirements as in “very good”, AND**

- Thorough identification of the research risks, with alternative research strategies and “fall back” research options.