

Guidelines for candidates and host institutions

The purpose of the Odysseus programme is to provide outstanding researchers who have built up a career outside Belgium with start-up funding in order to develop a research group or set up a research line at a Flemish university - possibly in collaboration with another or other Flemish research organisations.

The FWO opens the new call for Odysseus projects **from 2 June 2020 to 30 September 2020**. Following the recent optimisation and reforms within this channel, the FWO is pleased to offer candidates and their host institutions this step-by-step plan and these guidelines.

For further information, refer to the renewed [Odysseus website](#) and new [Odysseus regulations](#).

If you have any further questions regarding the Odysseus programme, please email Odysseus@fwo.be.

STEP 1: Nomination by university (internal selection)

What? Internal selection procedure at university in the Flemish Community, possibly in collaboration with another or other Flemish research organisations. Importantly, achieving a gender balance (max. two-thirds of nominated candidates of the same gender).

Who? University (possibly in collaboration with another or other Flemish research organisations).

When? Internal timelines and deadlines of the universities.

STEP 2: Online submission to FWO (via web link provided by Research Coordination Office)

What? Candidacy to be submitted via a unique web link provided by the Research Coordination Office (DOC) (see [example of application form](#)). Importantly, candidate is required to attach a declaration of commitment signed both by the rector and by the head of department or faculty (see [guidelines for declaration of commitment](#)). Failing such a binding declaration of commitment, the application shall be declared ineligible. Please also make sure to update your online [FWO e-portal](#) profile, including a detailed publication list.

Who? Candidate [via web link provided by university](#) (Research Coordination Office).

When? Before 30 September 2020, 17:00 (Belgian time).

STEP 3: Eligibility check

What? Submitted candidacies are checked for eligibility and for compliance with the various requirements of Type I and Type II. Candidates and universities are subsequently notified of the (in)eligibility of their candidacies.

Who? FWO administration.

When? After the deadline, until (mid-)October 2020.

STEP 4: International external peer review

What? For each eligible candidacy, suitable international external referees are invited to prepare a written evaluation (in principle, 4 referees' reports per candidacy). The evaluation is based on an [evaluation grid](#) designed especially for the Odysseus programme. This should result in consistent evaluation across all scientific areas.

On the one hand, the researcher will be evaluated for their scientific impact in the broad sense of the term and for personal motivation and competencies to bring the submitted project to a successful conclusion. A distinction is made between Type I and Type II candidates. On the other hand, the scientific added value and the methodology of the project will be evaluated. For an Odysseus project, equal value is attached to the excellence of the candidate and the quality of the research project (50%-50% weighting of scores).

Who? FWO and ESF-Science Connect.

When? October 2020-January 2021.

STEP 5: Pre-selection based on external peer review (optional)

What? The available budget is expected to allow the funding of only 9 to 13 Odysseus projects. It was therefore decided to invite maximum 50 candidates for an interview.

If there are more than 25 applications of either Type, a pre-selection, based on the 4 submitted recommendations from the external referees for each candidacy, will take place whereby an ad hoc multidisciplinary international jury (same jury members as in step 6) selects the candidates to be invited for an interview.

Who? FWO and international high-level jury.

When? End January 2021, upon conclusion of external peer review.

STEP 6: Interview by international high-level jury

What? Eligible nominated candidates are interviewed by an ad hoc multidisciplinary international jury of experts (same jury members as in step 5). 10-minute oral presentation of the research, 20-minute interview and 10-minute evaluation (without the candidate). Based on the external referees' reports and the interview, the high-level jury compiles a binding ranking based on excellence. Their evaluation is also based on [the Odysseus evaluation grid](#) (see step 4). The highest ranked Odysseus projects within the available Odysseus funds are nominated for funding. Importantly, the high-level jury shall also provide a sufficiently large list of alternate candidates.

Just as in the previous Odysseus call, there will be two interdisciplinary panels: one for the Type I and one for the Type II candidates. In this way, both Types of Odysseus fellowships are evaluated separately, which is recommendable due to the difference in profile between both Types of Odysseus projects.

Each jury will consist of 11 to 13 members, depending on the amount and diversity of applications. The juries will not be set up until after the deadline in order to ensure an optimal match with the submitted applications.

Who? Candidate, international high-level jury, and FWO.

When? End February 2021.

STEP 7: Ratification by FWO Board of Trustees

What? Official ratification of the binding ranking compiled by the high-level jury. Candidates and universities will subsequently be notified of the decision.

Who? FWO Board of Trustees.

When? March 2021.

STEP 8: Confirmation of inclusion for Odysseus funding

What? Successful candidates who are awarded an Odysseus project confirm as soon as possible to the FWO whether they will or will not make use of the awarded funding and appointment. The confirmation must also include the official start date of the Odysseus project, possibly up to one year after announcement of the results. Importantly, when a successful candidate decides not to make use of the awarded funding, an alternate candidate will be selected (based on the ranking compiled by the high-level jury).

Who? Candidate.

When? Before 15 December 2021.

STEP 9: Start of Odysseus project

What? Before the start of the project an agreement (duration 5 years) is prepared and signed by the appointed Odysseus researcher, the FWO, the university-host institution (and possibly another or other Flemish research organisations as partner).

Who? Candidate, university (possibly in collaboration with another or other Flemish research organisations, FWO).

When? Appointed Odysseus researchers can start up to 1 year after the date of announcement of the results (i.e. March 2022).