A practical introduction for starting FWO PhD Fellows

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Congrats to 491 new PhD fellows!

• ‘aspirant’ fundamental research
  • 1057 candidates -> 295 granted (27,9%)
    • 1 Kom op tegen Kanker
    • 1 ‘INBO- FWO’
    • 1 ‘L’Oréal-FWIS’

• ‘aspirant’ strategic basic research
  • 648 candidates -> 196 granted (30,2%)
    • 1 ‘INBO- FWO’
This presentation...

- What you should learn today...
  - *How to live and work as a FWO PhD fellow ("aspirant")*
  - *HR and research related aspects*

- This presentation
  - serves as fellow’s “operating manual” (key topics only)
  - more details: webpages / regulations / FAQ / e-portal

- **DISCLAIMER**
  - *Official & binding documents: regulations in Dutch*
    - *English regulations: no legal status*
Covid-19

Crisis impacts your research and your career...
• restricted access to research facilities
• taking care of children during lockdown
• increased commitment to teaching or healthcare, ...
• standstill international mobility
• ...

Check FWO measures (reporting, use bench fee, ...)
maatregelen-coronavirus
measures-coronavirus
Agenda

• The FWO, you and your fellowship
• Your fellowship and your career
• Financial aspects of your fellowship
• “Out-of-Office”: holidays, illness, suspensions, leaves, stays...
• Info and contact
• Q&A
Welcome to the FWO

• Our mission
  • Funding of fundamental & strategic research
  • Funding programmes
    • Individual researchers (pre-, post-doc, mobility Pegasus)
    • Research teams (projects, SBO, Odysseus,...)
    • Research infrastructure
    • Scientific prizes

Principles
• Bottom-up in all disciplines
• Scientific excellence and interuniversity (incl research institutes) competition
• Transparent and equal opportunities

Opening new horizons...
FWO Key numbers

Budget 2021: **480 MEUR** (incl. EOS and Odysseus)

- ±1000 PhD (fundamental)
- ± 800 PhD (strategic basic)
- ± 900 Postdocs
- ± 1500 Projects (incl. infra)

- 79% PhD
- 21% 60% Postdocs 40%

- 27.7% PhD (basic)
- 30.1% PhD (strategic basic)
- 22.6% Postdocs Junior
- 22.8% Postdoc Senior
- 20.5% Projects
PhD fellowship: agreement and roles

• Agreement FWO - PhD fellow
  • Nov. 1, 2021 – Oct. 31, 2023 (1st term)
  • Renewal Nov 1, 2023 – Oct. 31, 2025 (application spring 2023)

• Roles
  • FWO: funding agency (“grant-providing body”)
    • Social security managed by HR-Department FWO
  • University: (main) hosting organisation
    • Disciplinary rules according to hosting university
    • In consensus with promotor
  • Additional host organization(s)
    • Agreement with main host organization
FWO: HR excellence in research

- Label awarded in December 2010
- Implementation of Charter & Code
- Focus on transparent recruitment procedures and family/gender friendly measures
- Check FWO HR strategy
PhD fellowship: agreement and rules

• General rules / specific rules / bench fee regulations
  • (NL/EN) – Dutch version is binding

• Ethical questionnaire (General regulations Art. 4)
  • You were sent an ethical questionnaire
  • Human and/or animal test subjects
  • Ethical clearance by research ethics committee (@host institution)

• Data Management Plan (DMP)
  • Start date + 6M: submit DMP online
  • Find more info + check with host institution
Research Integrity

- As part of FWO Policy:
  - Clause in call text, application and contract on commitment to RI
  - Profiles for (co)promoters and researchers
  - Adaptations in General Regulation and Regulation pre- and postdoc fellowships on procedure and sanctions in case of RI violation

- ! Read the detailed information and the RI Clause

Every applicant and beneficiary is expected to know the rules and what (s)he will be committed to.
PhD fellow: reporting

- Reporting *(invitation by FWO)*
  - Application for renewal fellowship
    - 2nd term Nov 1, 2023 – Oct 31, 2025
    - Report 1st term activities + outlook on 2nd term
    - *Invitation* March 2023 – submission May – decision end June
    - Recommendation promotor
  - Final report
    - *Also if ending fellowship earlier*
    - *Obtaining PhD* as crucial achievement!

- Updated view on output, achievements and impact
  - Attention to **various researcher profiles and research results**
    - Away from one-sided focus on ‘classical output’
    - Towards broader view on scientific accomplishments
    - *Research career:* range of scientifically relevant activities, skills, experiences and achievements
PhD fellow: dissemination

• All publications and reprints of PhD fellows
  • Acknowledge FWO Fellowship
  • Mention your project number
  • References in repositories host university – FWO-labeled

• All research related communication
  • Mention FWO affiliation!
Keep your publication list updated

Merge A.1.1 and A.1.2 -> A.1 ‘peer reviewed articles in journals’
- No distinction between WoS, VABB-SHW a.o.
- A2 ‘non-peer reviewed articles in journals’
- Publications previously in A.1.1 and A.1.2: merged in chronological order
  - Your responsibility - > Check carefully!

- Adding publications
  - Import XML (Flemish universities bibliography) – A1 -> C1 only
  - Other publications: add manually
  - Only if published or accepted for publication
FWO Open Access (OA) policy

• Why?
  • Publicly funded research should also be publicly available.

• What?
  • Publications resulting (partly) from FWO funding → Focus: articles;
  • also applies to already ongoing fellowships/projects/grants.

• How?
  • Published in an OA database (“green” OA) → Minimum requirement;
  • Full (“gold”) or partly (“hybrid”) OA journals → Bench fees

• When?
  • Green OA selected? Maximum embargo period of 12 months;
  • Right implemented in Belgian federal law (Art. XI.196, §2/1 of the Economic Law Code)

• Further reading?
  FWO General Regulations, article 2, paragraph 2: https://www.fwo.be/en/general-regulations/
  Scientific integrity: https://thinkchecksubmit.org/
Follow us on social media: @FWOVLaanderen

Spotlight on FWO-researchers

Researcher stories  "De Podkast"  #FWOVLaanderen  Stay tuned!
Spotlight on FWO researchers

Pictures/videos with #fwovlaanderen will feature on FWO website

FWO Instagram take-over
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Career & personal development

Opportunities
• to inspire you and your promotor
• to valorize research expertise in/out academic world
• to expand and strengthen your network
• to develop transferable skills

Possibilities
• Part of PhD research in other organisation
• 20% ‘other’ tasks
  • Mandatory doctoral training
  • Internships
  • Education master
• Remunerated activities outside PhD & host institute

• HR strategy research careers
PhD fellow: A continuous & full-time occupation ...

- All other activities should not hinder or delay the PhD research
- Doctoral training programme is mandatory

- Max 20% ‘other’ activities (40% if student physician-specialist “ASO”) – Art.18

Invited to report planned activities to FWO at start academic year
(elekot download: “notification of activities”)

- Administrative/clinical tasks
- Other research and scientific service tasks
- Training and education
  - Internships
  - Teacher training (education master)
  - Doctoral programme + courses related to PhD research
- Assisting in training and education tasks
  - Supervision of exercises, practical sessions, seminars
  - NO formal teaching assignments are allowed
- Real workload to accounted for (incl. preparation and related activities)
Internships ("stage")

- Part of (max 20%) ‘other’ activities
  - In any organization (public authority, company, ...)
  - Personal development (transferable skills)
  - ‘Job shadowing’
  - Get acquainted with
    - Research results exploitation, innovation, development,
    - Regulations, IPR, tendering, ...
    - Policy making...
    - Project management, communication, leadership, ...
Mobility: performing (part of) research elsewhere

- part of PhD research in (any) organisation (Art 4§2)
  - Research institute, enterprise, public authority, ...
  - Fully remunerated by FWO
  - Per 2Y term: up to 12 months in Belgium
  - or up to 6 months abroad (if FWO permission)
  - Agreement host university – organisation: IP rights remain at host organization

- Forms: “cumulatie aanvraag/combination request” (eloket)
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PhD fellowship: financial aspects

• Grant amount: level of assistant at Flemish university
  • € 2 116.90 (minimum net salary)
    • scientific seniority accounted for
    • family situation accounted for

• Exempted from personal income tax
  • Mind stays abroad and additional remunerated activities!
  • Tax declaration:
    – At the expense (‘ten laste’) of the parents (if same address)
    – At the expense of the partner when married or legally cohabiting

• Full social security (e.g. pension and health care)
  • You must join a health insurance fund (Ziekenfonds)

• Stop child allowance for the parents of the PhD fellow!
PhD fellowship: financial aspects

• **The year-end bonus (mid December)**
  - based on the salary (53%*) of the current year and on the working period during the first nine months of that same year

• **The holiday allowance (May)**
  - based on your salary (92%*) of May of the current year and *the working period during the previous year*
  *based on gross amount – incl. payroll tax*

• **Child allowance**
  - Notify birth to FWO
  - Join a child allowance fund -> family and maternity benefits
Additional remunerated activities?

A continuous full-time occupation ...

- Cumulating of revenues restricted
  - Why:
    - Income tax regulations
    - Nothing should hinder or delay PhD research

- Possible cumulations:
  - Allowance for a stay abroad
    - covers only *travel and lodging costs*
  - Remunerated activities *not related and subordinate to PhD research* (Art. 19)
    - If approved by host institution (promotor!)
    - ! Tax regulations & consequences
    - [FAQ](#)
    - Not during ‘office’ hours
  - Form ‘Cumulatieaanvraag’ / ‘Combination request’ (e-portal)
PhD fellowship: financial aspects

Commuting costs reimbursed by FWO (FAQ)

- Public transport costs
  - in Belgium to go to and from work.
  - foreign residence: only costs from and to Belgian border
- Send copy/proof to FWO
- Bicycle allowance
  - 0.24 € / km
  - Online application forms on the FWO e-loket/portal (/downloads)
Bench fee

- *For your independence & flexibility*
- *More info ([regulations](#))*

- PhD fellowship: €3,720 per year
  - Common responsibility of PhD fellow and promotor
  - May be cumulated with other working allowances
  - Credit balances may be used the next year

- Paid quarterly to university (credit line @university)
  - Based on expenditure declarations
  - Managed by financial antenna at your university

- During suspension (pregnancy leave, parental leave,...)
  - Bench fee remains available, but no expenditures can be accounted for
  - Administrative extension: no extra bench fee
Bench fee eligible costs (research related):

- **Items of lasting value** (equipment, computer, books, ...)
- **Consumables** (reagents, test animals & plants, chemicals...)
- **Operating expenditure** (copies, searches, data traffic...)
- **Remuneration** of persons not subject to social security who participate in the awarded research
- **Travel** (excl. commuting) and accommodation costs in Belgium and abroad) (no fixed accommodation allowance) / CO2-contribution
- **Study stays** and participations to conferences abroad (if in line with awarded research)
- **Publication costs** (as 1st author – or co-author+ cost-sharing)
- **Printing costs PhD thesis**
- **access to and dissemination of research results**
- Covid-19: homeworking expenses (based on host inst. internal rules)
Bench fee

The bench fee is NOT intended for:

• *registration on the university roll* or as a regular student in Belgium or abroad;
• *registration as a PhD student* and for the PhD programme;
• fellow's or promotor’s *personal expenditure*, incl. accommodation and commuter traffic;
• *central management costs* and/or general operating costs by the research group/dept or university;
• expenditure already covered by *other financing sources*;
• costs of other scholarship students, PhD students, postdoctoral fellows or staff members;
• costs for the *award of the PhD* (invitations public defense, hiring a room, reception, travel and accommodation of the jury, etc.);
• costs for the *organisation of a workshop* or conference.
Travel: how to finance

• Use bench fee:
  • Congresses and short stays (<4 weeks) (within Europe)

• Apply for a FWO travel grant. Apply **3 months** before departure:
  • congresses (outside Europe)
  • long stays (in/outside Europe) (5 weeks to 12 months)
Travel insurance

• The FWO vouches for
  • Insurance for occupational accidents abroad
  • Travel insurance (AIG):
    • During professional trips abroad
      – + private trip following the professional trip (max. 14 days)
      – Co-traveling partner/children insured as well
      – Exclusively private trips are not insured
    • Detailed information on conditions and coverage:
      – Contact FWO HR services – hr@fwo.be
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Out-of-office: holidays and leaves

• # vacation days ~ regulations of the host university.
• Take holidays in consultation with head department or your supervisor
  •  *Host organisation booking system*
• Inform FWO once a year
  • Email to hr@fwo.be
  • Only on the 20 ‘legal’ holidays
  • To cope with social security regulations
• Thematic leaves
  • Maternity leave
  • Parental leave / medical assistance / palliative leave -> RVA (National Employment Service)
  • Time credit -> RVA
  • Paternity leave
Out-of-office: illness

- You *must* join a health insurance fund (Ziekenfonds)!
- *Hospitalization insurance possible via university*

- Every absence due to illness
  - Notify FWO (HR) before 10am
  - substantiate (medical certificate) personeelszaken@fwo.be

- More than 30 calendar days
  - Inform your health insurance fund (<day 28)
  - You receive forms that will be (partially) filled in by the FWO.
  - As of the 31st calendar day:
    - suspension of FWO scholarship
    - Replacement income from your health insurance fund
  - Inform FWO when you resume work
  - Contact: hr@fwo.be

- FAQ
Out-of-office: work accident

- Inform FWO immediately
- Forms available on the FWO website (FAQ pages)
  - Accident at work report
  - Medical certificate
- Insurance via FWO
- A work accident is:
  - An accident during the execution of one’s normal duties
  - An accident on the way to and from work

- Contact: hr@fwo.be  personeelszaken@fwo.be
- FAQ
Out-of-office: Suspension/extension fellowship

• **Suspension** in case of long-term illness, pregnancy/breastfeeding leave, parental leave, palliative & medical assistance leave
  • Replacement income from RVA or health insurance

• **Extension** of the fellowship:
  • duration of suspension (≥ 14 days)
  • Suspension of ≥ 3 months (fulltime & continuous) → 1 year extension (once)
    (≥ 3 months: period with replacement income, hence ≥ 4 months illness)
  • Extension up to five years in cases for social and medical reasons (exceptional)
  • Time credit and voluntary part-time employment: no extension!

• ! Bench fee remains available, but no expenditures can be accounted for
• More info: [FAQ](#) pages
Out of office: research related stays

- Notify FWO of every stay
  - In Belgium or abroad
  - Conference, research stay, internship, ...
  - Always in consultation with your promotor

- Stay ≥3 months (and all internships)
  - Cumulatie aanvraag / Combination request
  - Permission promotor
  - Permission rector (via research coordination office @host-org)
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Info and contact

• Check programme [webpages and links]
• Check FAQ first!
• Contact page (email and phone numbers)
  • **single point of contact**: your file administrator
    – PhD fellow fundamental research
      o Biological sciences [bio@fwo.be (expert panel bio1, bio2, ...)]
      o Humanities [cult@fwo.be]
      o Social sciences [GM@fwo.be]
      o Medical sciences [med@fwo.be]
      o Science and technology [WT@fwo.be]
      o Interdisciplinary research [interdisciplinair@fwo.be]
    – PhD fellow strategic basic research
      [SB@fwo.be]
  • specific human resources and payroll matters only
    [hr@fwo.be personeelszaken@fwo.be]
  • Travel grants
    [interprog@fwo.be]
  • Do NOT use individual FWO neither other generic ("info", "post", ...) FWO mail addresses!
PhD fellowships

- Documents that have to be submitted during recruitment and commencement of employment
- Suspension and extension of the fellowship
- Altering personal particulars
- Resignation
- Remuneration
- Year-end bonus and holiday allowance
- Absences (due to illness or an accident)
- Commuter traffic in Belgium
- Holidays and leaves
- Research-related stays
- Additional remunerated activity
- Psychosocial well-being
To notify immediately

PERSONAL INFO:
• New address, phone/email
• Bank account number (declaration owner)
• Marriage/cohabitation (certificate)
• Birth children (certificate)
Must be uploaded to the FWO e-loket/portal (NOT BY EMAIL)

• Stays in Belgium and abroad
• Always: form ‘Melding verblijf’ or ‘Report of stay’
• More than 3 months - form ‘Cumulatie aanvraag’/’Combination request’
  • Also for internships
Forms available on the FWO e-loket/portal

• Pregnancy (medical certificate stating the expected date of birth)
• Suspension of the fellowship
• Each absence (illness, work accident, ...) -> medical certificate
Notify FWO/HR – see FAQ pages
FWO e-portal (e-loket)

- (www.fwo.be) -> Direct access: https://fwoweb.fwo.be
- New version e-portal

Keep your data up to date
Psycho-social well-being

- **FAQ**
- Extension due to social or medical reasons (exceptional)
- In case of conflicts
  - Talk to your promotor!
  - Talk to the ombuds or “vertrouwenspersoon” of your host institution
  - If things get out of hand: FWO as last resort can mediate
    - (contact hr@fwo.be)
  - Don’t wait until it is too late!
Thank you for your attention
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  • ‘General interest’ questions
  • Specific ‘personal’ questions -> hr@fwo.be
  • - > Updated FAQ/programme webpages