Applying for a FWO doctoral fellowship

Info session

December 2018
Preface

• What you should learn today...
  • to understand the evaluation & selection process
  • to prepare an application that meets the evaluation criteria

• This presentation
  • serves as applicant’s “quick starting guide” (key topics only)
  • more details: postdoc webpages incl. documents & regulations

• DISCLAIMER
  • Official & binding documents: regulations in Dutch
    • English regulations: no legal status
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. PhD fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
Welcome to the FWO

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

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

Opening new horizons...
The FWO by numbers

Budget: **350 MEUR**

- **23%** Research projects
- **5%** Fellowships
- **72%** Infrastructure

- **5%** Fundamental Research
- **5%** Strategic Basic Research
- **5%** Clinical Research
- **74%** Infrastructure

**Fellowships**

- 854 PhD fellows
- 800 PhD fellows SB
- 791 Postdocs

- **51%** PhD-fellows
- **42%** Postdocs
- **49%** Men
- **58%** Women

- **28,9%** PhD fellows SB
- **27,4%** Postdocs
- **20,5%** PhD fellows (fund.)
- **82%** PhD fellows
- **18%** Postdocs

**Research projects**

- **72%** infrastructure
- **23%** fellowships
- **5%** research projects

**Year 2018**

- 74% infrastructure
- 16% fellowships
- 5% research projects
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. PhD fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
FWO PhD fellowship at a glance

- **Target group**
  - young researchers to complete a PhD
  - *parallel calls* fundamental research *(FR)* / strategic basic research *(SB)*
  - 1 choice up to 2 times
  - All nationalities
  - Master diploma ‘ManaBa’ / EER+CH
    - Obtained ≤ 3 years ago on March 1, 2019
    - Non-Belgian master: no attestation needed
    - SB: no ‘distinction’ needed
  - Applied earlier? [Transitional measures](#)
  - *Advanced Master* (‘ManaMa’) not taken into account

- **4-year grants**
  - start Nov 1, 2019
  - 2 years + renewal
  - Full time & continuous
  - *Fellowship grant* € 2,015.51 /month
  - *bench fee* € 3,720 /year
PhD fellowship: fundamental vs strategic

Both fellowships: Challenging & original research (PhD level)

**Strategic:** research with a goal
- Innovative applications
  - Products, processes, services
  - Long term perspective
- **Economic** added value
  - Specific companies
  - Collective of companies / (industrial) sector
  - In line with Flemish transition priorities (societal + economic)

**Fundamental research**
- “curiosity driven”
- Knowledge

- Applications may follow
  - Societal & economic benefits
  - Long term

Dec 2018

Info session PhD fellowships 2019
1. Health & Well-Being
2. Smart Resources Management
3. Food
4. New energy Demand & Delivery
5. Urban planning, mobility dynamics & logistics
   - sustainable smart cities
   - increased spatial efficiency through smart densification
   - synchromodality
   - spatially resilient systems
   - green mobility and logistics
   - intelligent transport systems
   - behaviour and lifestyle
   - big data.
6. Digital society

Economic & societal added value
(‘future’ economic activities)
Eligibility window: master diploma

Extensions eligibility window (+1Y): regulations Art 7 maternity-, parental-, sickness leave > 3m : phys./pharm.-specialist or res. veterinarian >1Y training
Eligibility window: scientific seniority

- Scientific experience / seniority
  - ≤ 18 months since master
    - Not accounted for during advanced Master studies
    - Accounted for employment %
    - Counted as on March 1, 2019!
    - Applied earlier? Transitional measures

- Any kind of ‘scientific activity’ (not just PhD research)
- All university/university college appointments
  - Excl. ATP, practice/teaching assistant...
- Business enterprise R&D experience

- -> prove by contracts, documents, statements
Eligibility window: scientific seniority

* Limit dates in case of fulltime continuous research

1st application

Sep 1, 2017* 18 months Mar 1, 2019 submission

Transitional measures

Oct 1, 2016* 36 months Oct 1, 2019

1st application

Sep 1, 2017* 18 months Mar 1, 2019 submission

Transitional measures

Sep 1, 2017* 18 months Oct 1, 2019

1st application

Sep 1, 2017* 18 months Mar 1, 2019 submission

Transitional measures

Oct 1, 2016* 36 months Oct 1, 2019

* Limit dates in case of fulltime continuous research
Eligible host organisations

- Main host organisation
  - 5 Flemish universities
  - Evangelic Protestant Faculty Leuven / Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels (not SB)
- + Flemish/federal research institutes (research location)
- SB: max. 12months per 2-years term @Flemish company (IPR)

- (co-)supervisors (@main host + Flemish/federal)
  - -> FWO invites them for recommendation letter
- Main supervisor: Regulations Art.9
- Co-supervisor: postdoc level
Other PhD programmes

• **Special PhD fellowship**: procedure and timeline as before / 1 dedicated panel
  • 1 year fellowship to complete PhD
  • Candidates not working in research

• **Clinical PhD fellowship**: procedure and timeline as before (2019)
  • Medical, veterinary, ... specialist
  • 50% for 2 years

• **ICM**: Interuniversity College Management Sciences: no new call
  • PhD fellowships FR (G&M2 panel) or SB (SBGM panel)

• **European University Institute (EUI) fellowship**
  • Social sciences – Florence
  • Deadline 31 January 2019

• **Baekeland PhD programme**
  • PhD project with (co-financing!) Flemish company
  • PhD programma @ Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO)

Dec 2018

Info session PhD fellowships 2019
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. PhD fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
Single submission 2-step evaluation & selection process

Step 1
- Remote assessment: 3 panel members
- (online) panel meeting consensus scoring & ranking
- Rejected proposals
- Retained for step 2 interviews

Step 2
- Panel meeting: interviews consensus scoring & ranking
- Rejected proposals
- Selected candidates

Dec 2018
Info session PhD fellowships 2019
Submission to expert panels

• Panel structure fundamental research
  • ‘Fellowships’ (PhD/postdoc) panels AND ‘fund. project’ panels
  • 2x31 panels: 30 in 5 scientific domains + interdisciplinary panel (cross-domain)
  • New panels: members published Jan 2019
    • 12 members incl. scientific chair
    • >50% members with non-Flemish affiliation

• Panel structure PhD fellowships strategic basic research
  • 24 panels
  • New panels: members published Mar 2019
    • 12 members, moderated by FWO representative
    • >50% members with non-Flemish affiliation
    • ≥ 1/3 involved in R&D business enterprise sector
Submission to expert panels

- Choose panel that best fits your application!
  - Check panel scopes FR or SB
  - Interdisciplinary panel (not SB). Follow acceptance criteria decision tree
  - SB: research methodology (not application field)
  - SB: if in doubt, contact SB@fwo.be (primary/secondary choice) <1 Mar 19
  - Former ICM FWO fellowship (management sciences) - -> GM2 (or SBGM)

- Evaluation of your proposal:
  - Consensus panel decisions (scoring & ranking) in both steps (preselection / interviews)
  - Roles (per application):
    - 3 panel members as internal evaluators of your proposal in step 1
    - 1 of the internal evaluators as rapporteur (feedback to applicants)
Evaluation criteria: “candidate” & “project”

Step 1 preselection

• Study results
• Motivation & relevant competences

Step 2 (interviews)

• Potential as an independent researcher

Step 1 + 2

• Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
• Quality research approach, feasibility

Scoring range (all criteria in step 1 and step 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fair/Reasonable</td>
<td>Good/very good</td>
<td>Excellent/outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weighted total score (both steps) e.g.: 5 3.5

Dec 2018
Evaluation criteria: “candidate” “project” ”application potential”

**Step 1 preselection**
- Study results
- Motivation & relevant competences

**Step 2 (interviews)**
- Potential as indep. researcher
- Potential as strategically thinking & innovation-oriented researcher

**Scoring range (all criteria in step 1 and step 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B−</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A−</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fair/Reasonable</td>
<td>Good/very good</td>
<td>Excellent/outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Weighted total score (both steps) e.g.: | 5 | 3,5 | 4 |

Dec 2018

**20%**

20%
Uniform evaluation: scoring descriptors and grids

Step 1 (preselection)

- Study results
- Motivation & relevant competences

Step 2 (interviews)

- Potential as an independent researcher
- Potential as strategically thinking & innovation-oriented researcher (SB)

Step 1 & 2

- Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
- Quality research approach, feasibility

- Strategic importance research approach (relevance)
- Strategic importance for possible users (impact)

Full grids online + @end of this ppt

Dec 2018

Info session PhD fellowships 2019
Selection process – step 1 preselection

• Each panel: max. “Q” grants (Q=panel quota) available
  – Q: based on number of applicants and total available grants
  – Max. Qx2 candidates to pass preselection
  – (online) panel meeting starting from 3 internal reviews
  – Panel consensus score candidate & project -> weighted total score -> ranking
  • SB: + application potential

Example (Q=4)
Selection process – step 2 interview

- **New consensus scores candidate & project** -> weighted total score -> ranking

  **Max Q grants directly attributed:**
  - **best ranked weighted total score**, AND also **min. scores per criterium**
  - **min. scores: quality threshold**

  ‘**Wildcard**’: best remaining candidates
  - Panel decides on wildcards (ranking) and on who drops out

**Example (Q=4)**

- Min scores e.g. 4 4
Remaining grants: ranking the wild cards

- After all panel sessions: remaining grants attributed
  - Overall ranking of *remaining valuable candidates (wild cards)*
  - Using *standardised (z-)scores per panel*
  - Example:

1. Panel A
2. Panel B
3. Panel C

- Remaining grants
- Reserve list ranking
- FWO-VITO grants (2 +2)
Feedback to candidates

All feedback AFTER selection decision Board (> October 2019)

Candidate
Rapporteur’s synthesis step 1 (and step 2)

Project
Rapporteur’s synthesis step 1 (and step 2)

Scores (step 1 OR step 2)
5 3,5 4,4 (ex.)
C P WTS

Out in step 1
- Scores preselection
- Synthesis rapporteur
- Panel cut-off score

Out in step 2
- Scores interview
- Synthesis step 1 & 2
- Rank (if wild card)

Grant
- Scores interview
- Synthesis step 1 & 2
Feedback to candidates (SB)

All feedback AFTER selection decision Board (> October 2019)

**Candidate**
Rapporteur’s synthesis step 1 (and step 2)

**Project**
Rapporteur’s synthesis step 1 (and step 2)

**Application potential**
Rapporteur’s synthesis step 1 (and step 2)

**Scores (step 1 OR step 2)**

- 5
- 4.5
- 4
- 4.7 (ex.)
- C
- P
- A
- WTS

**Out in step 1**
- Scores preselection
- Synthesis rapporteur
- Panel cut-off score

**Out in step 2**
- Scores interview
- Synthesis step 1 & 2
- Rank (if wild card )

**Grant**
- Scores interview
- Synthesis step 1 & 2

Dec 2018

Info session PhD fellowships 2019
Timing PhD Fellowships

Submission
Mar 1, 2019

Eligibility
Mar 2019

Preselection by
End June 2019

Interviews
Sep 2 - Oct 4 2019

Decision Board
Oct 16, 2019

Feedback &
contract

Start fellowship
Nov 1, 2019

Dec 2018

Info session PhD fellowships 2019
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. PhD fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
Preparing your application (1/5)

- E-portal (www.fwo.be) (*register in time!* -> FWO Validation /48hrs)

Your e-application:

FWO processing:

Admin eligibility positioning

Evaluation ‘candidate’

Evaluation ‘project’

Evaluation ‘appl potential’
Preparing your application (2/5)

- Edit your personal details.
- Start a new application or complete an unfinished application.

Admin eligibility positioning:

- Studies & career: *correct & complete!*
- Discipline codes: *new list! Use level 4*
- Contact details: *Addresses: (future) ‘Belgian service address’!*  
  *Legal domicile address*

Dec 2018  Info session PhD fellowships 2019  31
Preparing your application (2bis/5)

Edit your personal details

Start a new application or complete an unfinished application.

PhD fellowship / aspirant “fund research or SB”

---

**admin eligibility positioning**

- Studies & career: **correct & complete!**
- Discipline codes: **new list! Use level 4**
- Contact details: **Addresses**: (future) ‘Belgian service address’
- Host institution(s) incl. (co)supervisor
- Peer review: **select panel**
- Ethics: **EU-conform ethical questionnaire**
Host institution / supervisors

- Main host institution
  - Main supervisor -> recommendation letter
  - (co-supervisor) -> recommendation letter
- Additional Flemish/federal institutions
  - Co-supervisor -> recommendation letter
- “Collaborations”
  - Flemish company (SB) + contact person
  - Non-Flemish organisation with co-supervisor
  - Other: - -> ‘Research stays’

Recommendation letter: invitation by FWO (e-portal supervisor)
Preparing your application (3/5)

Evaluation ‘candidate’ step 1

- **Study results**
  - Academic education record
  - Percentiles master (or bachelor) – or equivalent

- **Motivation & Relevant competences**
  - Skills & expertise (acquired / developing)
  - Substantiated motivation

- Percentiles MSc (or BSc)
- Master thesis
- 5 main publications
- Other scientific output
- Scientific awards
- Personal statement!
- Career breaks
- Research stays

Dec 2018
Info session PhD fellowships 2019
### How to... percentiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acjaar</th>
<th># diploma's</th>
<th>P 10</th>
<th>P 20</th>
<th>P 30</th>
<th>P 40</th>
<th>P_50</th>
<th>P 60</th>
<th>P 70</th>
<th>P 75</th>
<th>P 80</th>
<th>P 85</th>
<th>P 90</th>
<th>P 95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bachelor</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>61,84</td>
<td>63,30</td>
<td>65,33</td>
<td>67,43</td>
<td>68,68</td>
<td>70,96</td>
<td>72,25</td>
<td>72,44</td>
<td>74,21</td>
<td>76,36</td>
<td>78,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>65,11</td>
<td>67,09</td>
<td>68,89</td>
<td>70,15</td>
<td>70,80</td>
<td>71,36</td>
<td>73,30</td>
<td>74,65</td>
<td>74,74</td>
<td>75,37</td>
<td>77,08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>62,63</td>
<td>64,35</td>
<td>71,03</td>
<td>72,71</td>
<td>73,55</td>
<td>74,98</td>
<td>75,78</td>
<td>75,90</td>
<td>75,98</td>
<td>77,05</td>
<td>77,97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>60,69</td>
<td>67,32</td>
<td>72,11</td>
<td>72,57</td>
<td>73,40</td>
<td>74,34</td>
<td>74,92</td>
<td>75,15</td>
<td>75,78</td>
<td>77,64</td>
<td>78,77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master in</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>60,34</td>
<td>62,51</td>
<td>63,39</td>
<td>63,93</td>
<td>65,00</td>
<td>66,91</td>
<td>69,37</td>
<td>72,38</td>
<td>73,38</td>
<td>76,10</td>
<td>77,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master in</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>59,43</td>
<td>61,53</td>
<td>61,94</td>
<td>63,02</td>
<td>63,90</td>
<td>65,49</td>
<td>67,27</td>
<td>67,70</td>
<td>68,59</td>
<td>70,12</td>
<td>71,35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master in</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>61,05</td>
<td>62,40</td>
<td>64,48</td>
<td>66,35</td>
<td>67,20</td>
<td>68,85</td>
<td>71,00</td>
<td>71,56</td>
<td>72,00</td>
<td>72,96</td>
<td>74,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master in</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>60,29</td>
<td>62,05</td>
<td>64,24</td>
<td>65,63</td>
<td>66,88</td>
<td>69,17</td>
<td>70,52</td>
<td>71,43</td>
<td>73,07</td>
<td>75,45</td>
<td>77,02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Karel:** MSc 2017 with 73,44%  
- - - > **P85** (90 students)  
- - - > top 15% of study group

**Tess:** MSc 2018 with 72,90%  
- - - > **P75** (104 students)  
- - - > top 25% of study group

**Shari:** MSc 2019  
- -> BSc 2017 with 80,55%  
- - - > **P95** (102 students)  
- - - > top 5% of study group

**Study results ≥ value** **PXX** (and < next P)

Dec 2018  
Info session PhD fellowships call 2019  
35
Preparing your application (4/5)

Project description

- Rationale and positioning w.r.t. the state-of-the-art
- Scientific research objective(s)
- Research methodology and work plan
- **SB**: Strategic dimension and application potential
- references

Submitted to other funding? **Be transparent!**

Positioning in research group

Evaluation ‘project’

- Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
  - International state-of-the-art
- Quality of the research approach and feasibility
  - Risk mitigation
Preparing your application (4bis/5)

**Project description**

- **WORD template** – max. 10 p. *(SB: 12 p)*
  - Rationale and positioning w.r.t. the state-of-the-art
  - Scientific research objective(s)
  - Research methodology and work plan
  - **SB**: Strategic dimension and application potential
  - references

- **Specific companies** -AND/OR-
- **Collective of companies / (industrial) sector** -AND/OR-
- in line with **Flanders 2025 transition priorities**

**Evaluation ‘application potential’**

- Strategic importance research approach (relevance)
- Strategic importance for possible users (impact)
Submitting your application (5/5)

State of application
In preparation

Submitted
- automatic confirmation follows
- registration number sent
- eligibility check: Q&A with FWO admin
- Not submitted = no application
Invited? Preparing the interview

• Course of the interview
  • ‘Elevator pitch’: 5 min.
  • Interactive discussion (Q&A): 10-15 min.

• Your pitch
  • Add value! <-> summarise project proposal
  • Elaborate your own and your project’s strengths
  • Highlight aspects that appeal
  • Try to stand out! ‘Uniqueness’ & capability
  • Additional achievements (since submitting application) (MSc thesis)
  • Pitch = supportive to content

• Practice!
  • Be the devil’s advocate!
  • Let colleagues & supervisor(s) put you through the grill...

• Practical:
  • Ppt (free template) to be sent to FWO (>1week before interview)
  • Physical presence recommended
    – ‘remote’ interview: exceptional & to be motivated
‘Performing’ the interview

• Meet the criteria:

Evaluation criterium ‘candidate’ step 2

• Potential competence as independent researcher
  • Knowledge in own research field
  • Reasoning skills and critical scientific mindset
  • Insight in project approach and positioning
  • Motivation

Evaluation criterium ‘project’

• Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
• Quality of the research approach and feasibility

Dec 2018
Info session PhD fellowships 2019
40
’Performing’ the interview (SB)

- Meet the criteria:

  Evaluation criterium ‘candidate’ step 2

  • Potential competence as independent researcher
  • Potential as strategically thinking & innovation-oriented researcher
  • Insight in strategic importance & positioning project
  • Notions of economic landscape (IPR, players, innovations)

  Evaluation criterium ‘project’

  • Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality
  • Quality of the research approach and feasibility

  Evaluation criterium ‘application potential’

  • Strategic importance research approach (relevance)
  • Strategic importance for possible users (impact)
Outline

1. FWO mission & key numbers
2. PhD fellowships at a glance
3. Evaluation & selection process
4. Preparing your application
5. ... further reading & contact
Further reading & contact

• Programme webpages Fund NL - EN / SB NL - EN
  • Regulations (legal version: Dutch)
    - General / PhD programme / bench fee / peer review
• Transition measures (if you applied earlier for PhD fellowship)
• Supporting documents
  – This presentation / Screenshots e-application
  – Scoring grids
  – Guidelines interview (later in 2019)

• Contact
  • Additional info & specific questions
  • FWOhelpdesk@fwo.be (e-portal/IT problems)
Finally: 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.
Good luck!
More information about the FWO

www.fwo.be
Information about FWO’s operation, regulations, scientific prizes and appeals...
All publications are free to download

www.geschiedenisfwo.be
Module about FWO’s history

Join us
Thank you for your attention
Appendix: Scoring descriptor grids
PHD FELLOWSHIP: scoring descriptors criterion “Candidate” (preselection)

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, all detailed course scores should be available. 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.

The proper scoring based on the provided percentiles should be well framed, and where relevant, be finetuned, taking into account other elements such as: upward trends during course of education, particular situations that may have influenced the study trajectory or results (cfr. personal statement), additional diplomas, (bachelor or) master thesis score, specific classes successfully attended, or other specific assets.

1.b Motivation and relevant competences

The candidates are asked not only to personally motivate their PhD fellowship candidacy, but also to substantiate acquired competences (expertise and skills). They should be able to present a credible approach to further improve skills and acquire missing competences if any. Evidence may be provided by mentioning previous and future research stays, publications. Evaluators should take into account the application file, the candidate’s motivation letter, the supervisor’s recommendation letter…, together with other provided info (research stays, publications, …) as also summarized on the cover sheet.

Relevant competences (expertise and skills) imply the proper scientific background to start the PhD project, apart from 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, …

For PhD grants strategic basic research (SB), intersectoral mobility (e.g., internships in an industrial R&D environment) and entrepreneurial and innovation skills are an asset as well.
## Scoring descriptor grid *Candidate preselection*

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&gt;30%</td>
<td>&gt;20%</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1.a. Study results (academic education)**

| no scoring possibility | Study results less promising to start PhD research. Master: <P70 (unless compensated for) or Bachelor: <P80 (unless compensated for) | Study results are reasonable (in view of starting a PhD) Master: ≥P70 (or equivalent) or Bachelor: ≥P80 (confirmed by intermediate master study results) or equivalent. | (Very) good academic education record. Master: ≥P95 (or equivalent) or Bachelor: ≥P90 (confirmed by intermediate master study results) or equivalent. | Top student with outstanding academic education record. Master: ≥P95, or equivalent Or Bachelor: ≥P95, or equivalent. |

**1.b. Motivation and relevant competences**

| no scoring possibility | Expertise and skills apparently not in line with what should be expected from PhD student. Some crucial competences are missing. | 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, and/or Candidate has started PhD research but with little evidence of progress made (incl. competences acquired) | Relevant competences and clear motivation likely are present and well substantiated (e.g. Master or Bachelor thesis) or some competences missing but clear and credible plan provided on how to acquire the proper skills (courses, training, ...), and/or 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. |
### Scoring descriptor grid  
*Candidate interview*

**PHD FELLOWSHIP SB: scoring descriptors criterion “Candidate” (interview)**

During the interview, candidates are assessed on their potential to develop towards an independent researcher with proper reasoning skills and a critical mindset. Scientific knowledge and project insight are also key elements in the evaluation. SB candidates should as well reveal potential competences on strategic innovation oriented thinking, including some economic insight and positioning of their research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair/reasonable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/very good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent/outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1.a Potential competence as an independent doctoral researcher (reasoning skills and critical mindset, scientific knowledge and project insight)

- **Lack of the inherent qualities required of a doctoral researcher.**
  - Research skills are present, with close supervision, able to obtain a PhD. Reasoning skills and critical scientific mindset below average and to be developed further, and/or
  - (just) sufficient basic knowledge to undertake the PhD project. Limited insight into the relevance of the proposed research approach.

- **Research skills present, candidate is able to carry out research relatively independently.**
  - Research skills present, candidate is able to carry out research relatively independently. Lacks some maturity, but is motivated. Relatively good reasoning skills but less critical attitude.
  - The candidate has sufficient basic knowledge within the field of research. He/she has a rather good insight into the relevance of the proposed research approach.

- **Motivated and (potentially) competent independent researcher.**
  - Motivated and (potentially) competent independent researcher. (Very) good reasoning skills and a good critical scientific attitude. Presents new concepts in a meaningful way, and solid basic knowledge within own field of research, but less knowledgeable outside this field. Good insight into relevance of proposed research approach.

- **Very convincing and driven candidate with great potential as researcher.**
  - Very convincing and driven candidate with great potential as researcher, very good reasoning skills and ditto critical scientific mindset. Presents innovative, original concepts in a convincing and substantiated fashion. Excellent grasp of own field of research, knowledgeable in areas outside. Excellent insight into the relevance of the proposed research approach and positioning of project.

#### 1.b Potential competence as a strategically thinking and innovation-oriented researcher

- **No insight in, or vision of the economically application potential of the project.**
  - Limited insight and vision of potential applications. Additional efforts are needed for the candidate to place his/her doctoral research in a context of economically oriented innovations.

- **Rather good interpretation of the possible applications.**
  - Rather good interpretation of the possible applications. Insight and vision of the strategic dimension towards an economic finality needs to be developed further.

- **Good insight into the application potential and possible economically relevant innovations.**
  - Good insight into the application potential and possible economically relevant innovations. Able to place the strategic importance of the project and the research approach. Notions of IPR issues, market players in the field, etc.

- **Driven potential ‘innovator’.**
  - Driven potential ‘innovator’. Very good insight and broad vision of the possible applications and their economic relevance. Able to accurately position and substantiate the strategic importance of the project, taking into account valorization, IPR, market, etc.
Scoring descriptor grids 

PHD FELLOWSHIP: scoring descriptors criterion “Project” (preselection + interview)

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, …)?

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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unacceptable | Weak | Fair/reasonable | Good/very good | Excellent/outstanding

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

| Project lacks an intellectual (PhD-worthy) challenge and/or an in-depth research question is missing | Research question and challenge limited or less relevant, and/or the research objectives lack focus. PhD worthiness is on the low side. and/or the project is rather a catch-up effort relative to the state-of-the-art. | Scientifically relevant project, rather high quality, and sufficiently challenging as PhD-research. The research is less well focused and/or the project brings less pronounced added value to the international state-of-the-art. | High-quality basic research, with significant scientific challenges (doctoral level). Original and significant contribution to the international state of the art. | Requirements as in “(very) good”, and very original project with potential to significantly impact the scientific state-of-the-art ("ground-breaking") Targeted research results are based on inventive and challenging ideas, concepts and research strategies. |

**2. b Quality of the research approach and feasibility of the project**

| Quality research approach and planning is below par, and/or Research activities are too limited for a four-year grant period, and/or Project not feasible because of too many planned activities. | Project approach and planning are flawed. Intrinsic feasibility is low and/or the objectives are formulated too vaguely to evaluate their feasibility. and/or Project does not fit to an individual PhD project and/or Ties with/dependence of other researchers, groups or external partners may jeopardize feasibility. | Research methodology reasonable well elaborated, but less well substantiated. Given some adjustments and risk control, project implementation appears to be feasible. | Adequate, substantiated research approach 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 precise identification of the risks with alternative strategies and fallback research options. |
PHD FELLOWSHIP SB: scoring descriptors criterion “Application potential” (preselection + interview)

The application potential, or the strategic importance w.r.t. the longer term potential to innovative applications with economic added value is being assessed both in the preselection phase, as during the interview. Two subcriteria are concerned:

Does the research—if successful—contribute to the (on the long term) realization of the anticipated applications? Is the research approach the proper one to this purpose?

Assuming the research approach is effectively geared towards applications: is there a significant impact for industry and economy, for possible (end-)users? Is the impact of the intended applications described in the project application credible and achievable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&gt;30%</td>
<td>&gt;20%</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
<td>&gt;5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unacceptable | Weak | Fair/Reasonable | Good/Very good | Excellent/outstanding

3.a Strategic importance of the research approach for the anticipated applications (= relevance)

- **Strategic dimension is lacking, no orientation towards an economic finality; and/or apparent mismatch between application potential and project content.**
- **Strategic dimension is present, but project is not well adapted to the anticipated utilization; and/or Strategic dimension based on an assumption for which there is as yet little concrete evidence.**
- **The strategic focus of the project on economically relevant innovations is substantiated in rather broad terms. Research approach is reasonably or partially geared to the anticipated applications.**
- **The strategic focus on economically relevant innovations is clear, and well substantiated in the proposal. Suitable project approach to allow the anticipated utilization.**
- **Requirements as in (very good), and best possible approach to achieve the intended applications. The latter are clearly the driving force behind the implementation approach. and Project well fits in broader strategic basic research goals of the research group.**

3.b Strategic importance of the potential applications for possible users (= impact)

- **The anticipated application is not relevant for possible users nor is the proposed impact realistic; and/or the project is too strongly embedded in the strategic R&D horizon of a single company (cf. Backland programme at Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship)**
- **Application potential may be real but of less economic relevance and limited impact for the identified possible users.**
- **The anticipated applications are economically relevant, they have a potential impact on possible users. The proposal exhibits certain flaws or gaps in the identification and/or elaboration of the (potentially present) applications.**
- **If successful, the project is very likely to effectively contribute to economically relevant innovations within the identified companies and/or sectors, or even new economic activities. These are clearly defined and interpreted.**
- **Requirements as in (very good), + If successful, project could play a key role to disruptive innovations, implying substantial economic added value. Moreover, this goal is realistic. and (A+): a successful project may lead to a substantial economic added value for Flanders.**
PHD FELLOWSHIP: scoring descriptors criterion “Project” (preselection + interview)

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, ...)?

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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fair/reasonable</td>
<td>Good/very good</td>
<td>Excellent/outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.a Scientific quality, relevance and challenge, originality

- Project lacks an intellectual (PhD-worthy) challenge and/or an in-depth research question is missing.
- Research question and challenge limited or less relevant, and/or the research objectives lack focus. PhD worthiness is on the low side.
- Project is rather a catch-up effort relative to the state-of-the-art.
- Scientifically relevant project, rather high quality, and sufficiently challenging as PhD-research. The research is less well focused and/or the project brings less pronounced added value to the international state-of-the-art.
- High-quality basic research, with significant scientific challenges (doctoral level). Original and significant contribution to the international state of the art.
- Requirements as in “(very) good”, and very original project with potential to significantly impact the scientific state-of-the-art (“ground-breaking”).

2.b Quality of the research approach and feasibility of the project

- Quality research approach and planning is below par, and/or
- Research activities are too limited for a four-year grant period, and/or
- Project not feasible because of too many planned activities.
- Project approach and planning are flawed. Intrinsic feasibility is low and/or the objectives are formulated too vaguely to evaluate their feasibility.
- Project does not fit to an individual PhD project and/or Ties with/dependence of other researchers, groups or external partners may jeopardize feasibility.
- Research methodology reasonable well elaborated, but less well substantiated. Given some adjustments and risk control, project implementation appears to be feasible.
- Adequate, substantiated research approach 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 precise identification of the risks with alternative strategies and fallback research options.