Regulations former FWO postdoctoral fellowships

General Regulations

The General Regulations apply.

Detailed information, full regulations and forms are available online. Any additional information can be obtained from the secretariat of the Research Foundation - Flanders, Egmontstraat 5, 1000 BRUSSELS, tel 02 512 91 10.

Scope

Art. 1.

These regulations apply to Postdoctoral Fellows (*) of the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO).


Applications and seniority

Art. 2.

Candidates must hold a PhD by thesis (*) (the thesis defence must have taken place no later than 1 June preceding the fellowship) or a degree or certificate recognised as equivalent by law or in accordance with European Union directives or a bilateral agreement, in compliance with the provisions of the Flemish Codex on Higher Education of 11 October 2013, Art. V 20.

* A Higher Education Faculty Qualification or a Special PhD is regarded as equivalent to a PhD when applying for a Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Art. 3.

Candidates must submit their applications in English and be affiliated to at least one of the following host institutions: a university in the Flemish Community or to the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven or the Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels for research related to religious studies or theology, the Hogere Zeevaartschool for research related to nautical sciences, the Vlerick Management School and the Antwerp Management School for research related to management sciences, or the Institute of Tropical Medicine for research related to tropical medicine and veterinary medicine and to healthcare in developing countries, possibly in collaboration with a Flemish or Federal scientific institution where they conduct their research. If the research is conducted in collaboration with a university college, it shall be carried out under the supervision and responsibility of a Flemish university.

Candidates with an academic degree (second cycle) from a university outside the Flemish
Community are assumed to have sufficient knowledge of Dutch to enable their integration into the research team.

Art. 4.

Researchers can apply for a postdoctoral fellowship in the first 3 years after obtaining their PhD (date of PhD degree), calculated from June 1 of the year of applying. This time limit is postponed by one year per period of at least 3 months of maternity leave or per continuous period of at least 3 months full-time parental leave which was taken between the date of the PhD and the application.

If the applicant has more than one PhD, this rule only applies to the PhD from the same study as the proposal for postdoctoral research. Regardless the field of study or discipline, the first PhD may in no case have been achieved more than 10 years ago, starting from 1 June of the year of applying.

The FWO Executive Committee may exceptionally approve an exception to this rule in cases where, for social and medical reasons, there has been either an interruption in the preliminary stage, or a reduced capacity to work.

Art. 5.

Persons cannot apply for a fellowship of which they have previously, even if only partially, been the beneficiary.

Art. 6.

The applications will be submitted for evaluation to the Expertpanels who will judge the qualifications of the candidates. The Expertpanels will provide advice to the Board. The Board of Trustees will make the final decision.

Appointment

Art. 7.

§1. After selection by the competent Expertpanel, the Postdoctoral Fellow is offered a 3-year employment contract, which is renewable once for another three years. This second period should immediately follow the first. For the renewal to be reviewed and approved by the relevant Expertpanel, it must be submitted before 1 February at 17:00 of the last year of the fellowship. If this date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the closing date is moved to the following Monday at 17:00.

§2. If the first fellowship has been suspended as a result of taking up another fellowship at a foreign institution or a company, as set out in article 23 of these regulations, the application for renewal must be submitted in the last full fellowship year of the first fellowship, including the relevant extension, so that there is no time lag between the first and second fellowship.
Art. 8.

Whether or not fellows are required to undergo a medical examination at the occupational health service of the institution where they carry out their research depends on the regulations of their host institution. If a medical examination is required according to the regulations of their host institution, their appointment will not be effective unless a favourable medical report is obtained.

Art. 9.

The granting of a fellowship of limited duration is the subject of an individual employment contract between the Foundation and the holder.

Art. 10.

Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 13, Postdoctoral PhD fellows shall not be members of the Academic Assistant Staff or Independent Academic Staff of the universities or of:

- groups 1 through 3 of the Teaching Staff of the Maritime Academy;
- the faculties (Career Faculty and Faculty of Management Practice) of the Vlerick Management School;
- the faculty of the Antwerp Management School;
- the academic staff of the Institute of Tropical Medicine (full professor, professor, associate professor and teacher).

Art. 10 bis.

In case the postdoctoral researcher is no longer affiliated to a university in the Flemish Community or to the Evangelical Protestant Faculty in Leuven or the Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels, the Hogere Zeevaartschool, the Vlerick Management School, the Antwerp Management School or the Institute of Tropical Medicine, possibly in collaboration with a Flemish or Federal scientific institution, the contract of employment will be terminated by operation of law.

Art. 10 ter.

Subject to the general law of contract termination, the fellowship of a postdoctoral researcher, and therefore the employment contract, will, as a rule, terminate upon expiry of a period of 3 years.

Furthermore, the employment contract will be terminated for good cause, without compensation or notice to the researcher, if the latter commits a breach of integrity which immediately and definitively renders any professional collaboration between the FWO and the researcher impossible.
Art. 10 quater.

As soon as the FWO becomes aware of breaches of scientific integrity by one of its researchers, the FWO will hear the researcher.

The researcher has the right to legal counsel.

After having heard the researcher, the FWO can make the following decisions:

a) close the case without taking further action;

b) have the facts put down on record and include this record in the personal file of the postdoctoral researcher with the FWO;

c) issue a formal warning and include this warning in the personal file of the postdoctoral researcher with the FWO;

d) dismiss the researcher subject to payment of the statutory compensation;

e) dismiss the researcher for good cause.

The above-mentioned consequences b) and c) may also be taken into consideration by the competent expert panel for the evaluation of any application for extension of the fellowship.

Rights and obligations of holders of a Postdoctoral PhD fellowship

Art. 11.

Postdoctoral PhD fellows are administratively and legally dependent on the FWO Board of Trustees, represented by its Chair and its Secretary General. In disciplinary matters, they are subject to the administration of the host institution.

In addition, they undertake to comply with the FWO regulations and those of the host institution.

Art. 12.

Fellows may modify their research project for duly justified reasons, subject to advice of the head of their research department and after approval by the FWO. They cannot change host institutions. Host institutions may mutually agree on collaboration and place of employment.

Art. 13.

§1 The host institution may entrust the holders of a postdoctoral fellowship with duties whose total workload shall not exceed 8 hours per week. This provision shall not apply in cases of prolonged sickness, pregnancy and breastfeeding leave, stays abroad, full-time paternal leave, and palliative leave. Such duties may include:
• administrative or clinical tasks;

• supervision of exercises, practica, or seminars, the workload of which counts double (1 hour exercises, practica or seminars equals a 2 hour workload);

• non-remunerated teaching duties at a university or a university college (academic programmes) that do not exceed the limit of two year-hours during the first fellowship and the limit of three year-hours during the second fellowship. Activities at a university college or another university are subject to prior permission of the rector of the university acting as host institution.

For a part-time fellow, the maximum of 8 hours per week is reduced in proportion to the part-time fellowship.

§2 Holders of a postdoctoral fellowship may additionally be entrusted with a part-time remunerated activity at a higher education institution, provided their appointment as fellow is reduced in proportion to this part-time appointment, including 50% appointments under the tenure track system at the expense of the university operating resources.

Art. 14.

§1 The fellowship may not be accumulated with any other remunerated activity, save for the exceptions provided for in the following paragraphs of this article.

§2 For Doctors of Law enjoying a postdoctoral fellowship, the principle of non-accumulation as stipulated in §1 implies that they must not have been registered with the Bar. None of the exceptions mentioned below shall entail a derogation from this provision.

§3 Holders of a postdoctoral fellowship may be granted full or partial accumulation with grants for study stays abroad. Holders of a travel grant from the FWO, the Flemish Community, the Federal Government or as part of Cultural Agreements, may accumulate such grant with their fellowship. They are requested to notify the FWO thereof.

§4 The FWO may grant permission to holders of a postdoctoral fellowship to exercise a secondary activity within the restrictions set forth in the Decree on the universities in the Flemish Community and those which the university acting as host institution imposes on its own staff. This implies, among other things, that a secondary activity may be granted that can be accumulated up to 20% of the time. Moreover, the holder must submit a statement that he or she is engaged full time in the research task associated with the postdoctoral fellowship.

Art. 15.

Postdoctoral fellows must submit a report on their scientific activities to the FWO at the end of each academic year. A copy of this report must be sent to the head of the institution to which they are affiliated.

Art. 16.

All publications and reprints of Postdoctoral fellows must mention their title of Postdoctoral Fellow of the Research Foundation - Flanders.
Art. 17.

Holders of a postdoctoral fellowship who wish to spend a study stay abroad must ask for permission from the FWO. Such permission can only be granted if the postdoctoral fellow can continue to be subject to the Belgian social security system during his/her stay abroad. Therefore, the postdoctoral fellow must have been registered under the Belgian social security system for at least 30 calendar days prior to his/her departure. In exceptional cases, based on a justified request, the Secretary General may decide to exempt the PhD fellow from the requirement of continuing to be subject to the Belgian social security system.

Art. 18.

Holders of a fellowship have to notify the FWO as soon as possible of any temporary work interruption, regardless of the cause.

Art. 19.

Holders of a PhD fellowship have to register as compulsorily insured persons with the health insurance fund of their choice. In case of illness, the holder has to send a medical certificate stating the period of incapacity to the FWO within 48 hours; a copy has to be sent, via his/her departmental head, to the relevant department of the university to which the fellowship holder is attached.

Art. 20.

In case of an occupational accident, the FWO Personnel Department has to be notified by telephone within 24 hours in order to avoid penal consequences. The official statement together with a medical certificate has to be sent to the FWO as soon as possible. The occupational medical service of the institution and the departmental head will have to be notified as well.

Art. 21.

The fellowship holder is required to notify the FWO forthwith in writing of any change in his/her situation (marital status, birth, change of address, etc.).

Art. 22.

Postdoctoral Fellows may apply for a Research Grant from the FWO.

**Suspension**

Art. 23.

Postdoctoral researchers of the FWO can be granted a suspension of their fellowship during the period of holding a remunerated full-time foreign research fellowship or grant at a university abroad or a foreign scientific institution or a foreign company.
In such a case, the fellowship can, for a period of minimum six months and maximum two years, be extended by the period during which no payments were received. The maximum of two years applies to the first fellowship together with its possible renewal.

In this case, the fellow must first submit a request for extension to the secretary-general of the FWO.

Postdoctoral fellows of the FWO must have an appointment of at least 80% in order to qualify for this flexibility measure.

If the foreign research fellowship or grant is used for research, as part of a research group or a research consortium for which direct or indirect financing is received from a Flemish financing channel (e.g. Big Science projects), no extension of the postdoctoral fellowship can be granted.

Art. 24.

The fellowship will be suspended in cases of civil service, prolonged sickness leave, pregnancy and breastfeeding leave, parental leave, palliative leave and leave for medical assistance. In these cases the fellowship will be extended by the period during which no payments were received. Extensions of less than two weeks will not be taken into consideration.

Pursuant to the applicable legal provisions, an application for time credit can be submitted three months in advance. This shall not give rise to an extension of the fellowship.

Holders of a fellowship should notify the FWO as soon as possible of such interruptions in their activities.

For an application for a subsequent fellowship to be submitted competitively to the FWO and to allow the fellowship to be continued without interruption, a first fellowship will be extended until the end of the academic year, if during the first fellowship full-time suspensions of consecutive periods of 3 months occurred, during which the fellowship was not paid because of prolonged sickness leave, pregnancy and breastfeeding leave, military and/or civilian service, parental leave, and palliative leave. Such an administrative extension will be granted only once. Any suspensions during such automatic extension of the fellowship will not give rise to any further extension of the fellowship. There will be no administrative extension for a first renewal.

**Remuneration**

Art. 25.

The salary scale of Postdoctoral Fellow is the salary scale of PhD Assistant according to the Decree of the Flemish Government of 4 May 2001. (Belgian Official Gazette, 09/01/2002).

(As per 01/07//2017 and at 100% - Current index: 1.6734)

Min. 4,053.81 and max. 6,319.49 euro
3 annual raises of EUR 689.03
11 biennial raises of EUR 1,289.13

Travel cost allowance: FWO fellowship holders are entitled to a commuter travel allowance (when using public transport or a bicycle) to the same extent as established for academic staff of the universities in the Flemish Community.


§ 1 The pay scale seniority of candidate postdoctoral fellows is calculated taking into account the acquired scientific seniority and the following provisions:

1° - the duration of the appointment under an employment of at least 50% at a university or scientific institution, insofar as the work involves research activities;

2° - the duration of the research activities voluntarily undertaken at a university in the Flemish Community, insofar as these activities account for at least 50% of a regular, full-time employment;

3° - half of the duration of the appointment referred to in 1° and 2° in the case of an employment of less than 50%.

§ 2 The duration of the appointment is calculated per calendar month: fractions of months are not counted. The total extent of the pay scale seniority can never exceed the nominal duration of the eligible periods.

§ 4 Each eligible period of prior employment shall be supported by an employment certificate.

Art. 27.

The salary is linked to the health index as applicable to the academic staff of the universities in the Flemish Community.

Art. 28.

The salary is paid monthly, at the end of the month, into a Belgian financial account.

Occupational accidents and liability

Art. 29.

Postdoctoral fellows are covered by legally required insurance against risks inherent in regular seminar and/or laboratory work, and against accidents on the way to and from work. This insurance covers also temporary foreign assignments for which prior permission has been granted by the FWO. For their travels, fellows may use all the usual means of transportation allowed for carrying passengers over water, in the air or on roads, provided they are not part of the crew.
The third-party liability of fellows is covered by a collective insurance policy taken out by the FWO.

**Child allowance**

Art. 30.

The FWO must be notified of all births. The Foundation will provide the required forms to obtain both the child allowance and the birth premium, which can be requested from the 6th month of the pregnancy. To preserve their right to child allowance, fellows with dependent children are advised to notify the FWO of any travel abroad. During their stay abroad they must also maintain a domicile in Belgium.

**Annual holiday**

Art. 31.

The holiday periods are the same as those indicated in the regulations of the host institution and are established in consultation with the departmental head.

Postdoctoral fellows shall inform the FWO secretariat of the dates of their annual holidays. The holiday pay, calculated on the basis of the salary of the month of June, will be paid into the holder’s account during the month of May.

**General provision**

Art. 32.

The years spent at the FWO are recognised as seniority when determining the salary of holders who are appointed at Community or subsidised institutions for secondary and higher education with full curriculum, as well as at Flemish and Federal scientific institutions and ministries.

**Final provision**

Art. 33.

Postdoctoral fellows may at any time resign their fellowship provided they have notified the head of the host institution, the head of their research department and the FWO thereof.

27/6/2017

*Note: the English version of the regulations are only a translation and have no legal force.*