Regulations former FWO research project

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.

Background

Art. 1.

The Flemish Government, by virtue of Art. 18 of the Decree of 30 April 2009 regarding the organisation and financing of the science and innovation policy, grants FWO funding to support basic research projects (*).

Pursuant to the Royal Decree of 18 January 1965 (Belgian Official Gazette, 5/2/65), the Interuniversity Institute for Nuclear Sciences (IIKW) receives federal funding from the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (Agreement of 12/4/1965).


The FWO administers all of the aforesaid funding.


Art. 2.

The objective of the FWO research projects is to advance fundamental scientific research, on the initiative of researchers from all disciplines.

Research projects

Art. 3.

The FWO Board of Trustees can award funding for research carried out by the following main host institutions: a university in the Flemish Community, the Evangelic Theological Faculty in Leuven and 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.

A research project is carried out under the direction of a supervisor, possibly in collaboration with one or more co-supervisors.

The focus is on projects that position their own research within a wider scientific arena.

Applications

Art. 4.

Applications for funding are to be submitted in English, via the host institution of the supervisor, using online forms. The forms must reach the secretariat of the FWO no later than 1 April at 17:00 of the year which precedes the budgetary financial year for which the application is submitted. If this date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the closing date is moved to the following Monday at 17:00.

Art. 5.

A researcher can act as (co-)supervisor for maximum two projects per call. All correspondence with the FWO occurs via the supervisor as responsible spokesperson for the project. A copy of all correspondence shall also be sent to the co-supervisors.

When the supervisor-spokesperson is granted a project and obtains funding, he/she cannot submit a proposal as supervisor-spokesperson or co-supervisor in the next application round. If an applicant receives funding as co-supervisor, he/she may compete for funding in the next application round.

Art. 6.

For a research project to be carried out within one or more universities or scientific institutions or university colleges, the application must also:

- prove that the project extends beyond the current activities of the interested department(s), and its execution calls for resources that exceed the normal financial resources of the said department(s);
- specify the share - in cash or in services - of the aforesaid institution(s) in the realisation of the research project.

Evaluation

Art. 7.

For the ex-ante, intermediate and ex-post evaluations of the files, the administrative bodies call on the FWO-Expertpanels. For the ex-ante evaluation, they also call on external referees, in accordance with the regulations for internal and external peer review.
Art. 8.

The supervisors must submit a scientific report to the FWO:

- for ongoing projects: during the last year of the agreement, a scientific report indicating the progress status of the research and the project work still to be carried out, together with a list of scientific publications, if any.
- for fully completed projects: upon expiry of the agreement, a final report on the scientific activities, together with a list of publications related to the project.

Agreement

Contracting parties

Art. 9.

The grants awarded by the FWO are set out in detail in an agreement. The parties to this agreement are:

The supervisor and the co-supervisors who undertake or continue to undertake the subsidized research.

§1. The supervisor who is also the responsible spokesperson towards the FWO shall have a remunerated appointment of at least 10% at the relevant host institution, and additionally meet one of the following conditions:

1° an Independent Academic Staff member with an appointment of at least 10% at a Flemish university;

2° an Independent Academic Staff member of at least 10% with an appointment at the Evangelical Protestant Faculty in Leuven and the Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels, for research related to religious studies or theology;

3° a research director of FWO;

4° a designated beneficiary of an ERC Grant with a Flemish university or the Evangelical Protestant Faculty in Leuven, the Faculty for Protestant Theology in Brussels, the Hogere Zeevaartschool, the Vlerick Management School, the Antwerp Management School or the Institute of Tropical Medicine as host institution;

5° a designated beneficiary of an Odysseus II grant with a Flemish university as host institution;

6° an (associated) professor or (full) professor of at least 10% affiliated to the Hogere Zeevaartschool and holder of a PhD, if the application is related to research in nautical sciences;

7° an (associated) professor or (full) professor of at least 10% (or appointed in a position with an equivalent English title) at the Vlerick Management School and holder of a PhD, if the application is related to research in management sciences;
8° an (associated) professor or (full) professor of at least 10% affiliated to the Antwerp Management School and holder of a PhD, if the application is related to research in management sciences,

9° an (associated) professor or (full) professor of at least 10% at the Institute of Tropical Medicine and holder of a PhD.

Or

10° an Independent Academic Staff member with a remunerated appointment of 5% at a Flemish university and with an appointment as (assistant) clinical head or an equal function in a university hospital;

§2. All co-supervisors have to be researchers of at least postdoctoral level. Co-supervisors have a remunerated appointment at a host institution that can act as a main host institution as referred to in art. 3 or at an academic programme of a Flemish School of Arts, or at another Flemish research institution or at a federal scientific institution, where the co-supervisor belongs to the Dutch-speaking community. (Foreign researchers can participate as co-supervisor in the Big Science programme project without FWO funding, provided the collaboration is relevant for the project).

§3. If the project involves several institutions that can act as main host institution as referred to in art. 3, at least the supervisor or one co-supervisor of each of these institutions shall meet the requirements set out in §1 of this article, and moreover hold such an appointment that fully covers the duration of the research project applied for.

§ 4. If the requirements set out in §1 are not met at the time of the application, the applicant needs to prove that this will be the case at the start of the agreement.

Art. 10.

In the special case of research that is carried out jointly by a supervisor and co-supervisors at different host institutions, each supervisor and each host institution must be involved in the agreement: the contract shall stipulate all relevant provisions concerning the recruitment of staff, the administration of the funding, and the ownership of the granted equipment.

**Duration and modalities**

Art. 11.

Research contracts will, in principle, have a duration of four years, renewable with maximum two years.

Art. 12.

The contract shall include unilateral termination clauses, which shall in any case be accompanied by prior notice provisions.
Art. 13.

The FWO will ask the host institutions to give their consent for the execution of the FWO sponsored research at their premises. The heads of the host institutions will be asked to give their approval for access by researchers from other institutions, to the equipment provided by the FWO.

Art. 14.

The funding is awarded exclusively for the execution of research projects approved by the FWO, hence the supervisors shall use the funding exclusively for this purpose. As soon as their use no longer meets this requirement, the funding - or their balances - shall return to the FWO.

Art. 15.

Any fundamental change to an ongoing research project must be made the subject of an investigation, equal to that for a new application, and shall be included in an amendment to the agreement, that does not extend the original agreement. Any partial modification of the research project, as well as any change in the planned expenditure, is subject to prior approval by the FWO.

Cost categories
Art. 16.

§ 1. For the execution of research projects, the FWO may grant funds for two categories:

1st category: funds for staff and consumables

2nd category: funds for equipment

These funds cannot be transferred from the 1st category (staff and consumables) to the 2nd category (equipment) and vice versa.

§ 2. For each project, and in the case of an interuniversity project, for each host institution, an amount of €45,000 to €130,000 per year for staff and bench fees can be applied for. For interuniversity projects the lower limit for the partner can be reduced to €20,000.

§ 3. The Expert Panels can, if necessary, reduce the requested budget, but they cannot increase it and they must respect the upper and lower limits specified.

§ 4. A maximum amount of €150,000 for equipment can be applied for. Applying for matching funding up to €150,000 is possible.

§ 5. The limits referred to in §2 of this article do not apply to projects under joint international calls such as under the ERA-NET scheme and under the Joint Programming Initiatives.
§ 6. Supervisors and co-supervisors are not allowed any remuneration or accumulation with a remuneration under an FWO project, unless an exception is granted by the administrative bodies.

1) STAFF AND CONSUMABLES

Art. 17.

§ 1. The following costs can be charged to the awarded staff and consumables funding, provided they are specified in the original application:

a. staff costs of scientific or technical employees;

b. normal consumables required for the execution of the project;

c. fees for job students, pollsters and expenses resulting from the invitation of a guest researcher in the research department;

d. small equipment of less than €20,000 per unit, required for the project;

e. fees for study stays and participation in conferences abroad provided they are in line with the awarded research project;

f. access to and dissemination of research results;

g. travel costs in Belgium.

h. Use of the Flemish Super Computer

§ 2. Staff costs can only be justified if:

- the recruitment of staff is included in the original application;

- the staff were recruited under an employment agreement or a grant agreement for the appointment of a PhD or postdoctoral fellow by the host institution;

- in the case of an appointment based on a grant award, the grant is subject to social security tax,

Staff costs can be justified throughout the term of the contract signed by the parties involved for the execution of the project, plus the following year.

Holiday pay upon termination in the case of staff having worked either for three-fourths of the project's duration, or for at least three consecutive years on one or more projects of the FWO, can be charged to a budget item specially provided for this purpose. For staff that do not meet the applicable requirements, however, it shall be charged to the fixed staff grant for the project.
§ 3. Positive balances of the awarded staff and consumables funding can be used for the justification of costs as stipulated in § 1, with the exception of staff costs (§ 1,a), for up to two years after the end date of the contract.

Art. 18.

If, under the terms of contracts supported by the FWO, the supervisors are allowed to recruit staff, such recruitment shall comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Research, as published in 2005 by the European Commission, together with the European Charter for Researchers. Furthermore, all appointments must comply with the applicable legal provisions and in accordance with the compensations and regulations in force at the host institution (and therefore in the large majority of cases in accordance with the system applicable at the universities in the Flemish Community) as regards the hierarchy of grades, the requirements for recruitment and promotion, and the remunerations. The host institutions may impose additional requirements if deemed necessary.

Scientific staff must meet the requirements to enroll for a PhD at a university in the Flemish Community or hold a PhD by thesis 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.

As far as is possible within the project objectives, the research shall be organised so as to enable predoctoral researchers to obtain a PhD by thesis.

As from budget year 2014, the host institution shall each year before 15 March of the following year, submit to FWO a list containing an overview of the staff working on the various FWO projects. The list is broken down by project/budget and includes the following information: surname, first name, date of birth, nationality, date of start of employment, date of end of employment, employment percentage, type of contract, statute (BAP-PhD fellow, BAP-WM, ATP…) and highest degree obtained, and a certificate of the host institution stating that the scientific staff meet the applicable requirements. Staff expenditure under FWO research projects that does not meet these requirements, shall be rejected.

2) EQUIPMENT

Art. 19.

Equipment: All materials acquired under a bench fee or an equipment grant of the FWO, shall become the property of the university or a scientific research institute to which the grant holder is affiliated, or of a university college, by virtue of the agreement made with a Flemish university that must be included in the application.

This institution undertakes, however, to keep the said material at the disposal of the researcher for the time that is needed to complete the research for which the grant was awarded. Moreover, it undertakes to neither sell nor lend out the material without prior permission of the FWO.

If the material can be purchased only with the contribution of foreign funds, the administrative bodies of the FWO shall decide on the ownership issue in consultation with the relevant authorities.
Material purchased under a grant of the FWO by a researcher who does not belong to the staff of a university, an assimilated institution or a Flemish or Federal research institution, shall remain the property of the FWO. The holder of such material undertakes to return it in perfect condition - except for normal wear and tear and in case of force majeure - when it is no longer needed.

Art. 20.

Only the equipment that is needed for the project and that is specified in the application, can be charged to this category. The maximum amount for this category is limited to €150,000. Matching funding up to €150,000 is allowed.

For the purchase of equipment other than that specified in the application form, an application must first be submitted to the FWO.

Bench fees and staff costs cannot be charged to the equipment category.

Expenses are accepted if they are dated during the year of the award and the following two financial years.

IN GENERAL

Art. 21.

Exceptional and duly justified requests for extensions must be submitted to the FWO no later than by 30 November of the last year of the period of use permitted by the regulations, being the term of the signed contract plus two years, and can be granted for a maximum period of six months.

Overheads:

Art. 22.

If allowed by the government, overheads can be paid to the host institutions in accordance with guidelines to be laid down by the government and the FWO. Apart from these overheads, the following items shall not be charged to an FWO grant:

- costs of renting, heating, lighting and maintaining premises and furniture, as these are costs that are normally to be borne by the host institution;
- management or administration costs.

Payment - justification - audit

Art. 23.

financial report (reporting) - payment

§1. As from 2016, two advance payments - one of 40% in April and one of 35% in October - on the awarded grant of the relevant grant year, including the overhead (if applicable) on the
awarded grant in proportion to the advance payment, are paid each year to the host institution for each project throughout its duration as specified for the project implementation in the signed agreement. The staff administration costs are included in the awarded grant. In the first year after the end date of the project, 15% of the total grant is paid out. At the time of the final settlement of the project, upon receipt of the financial report, the balance is paid out.

§2. The host institution submits a forecast of the expenditure on research projects of the relevant grant year to the FWO before February 15 of the following grant year.

§3. Each year, a financial report on the expenditure of the relevant grant year is submitted per project to the FWO before March 15 of the following grant year. The financial report includes a breakdown by category/grant and posting number and posting date or invoice date and an overall total year. The overall financial report includes the totals per year, per project and per category. This financial report is signed by the head of the Finance department and a second manager (e.g. head of the research administration) to confirm that the necessary audits have been carried out. They certify the financial report to be "true and accurate".

§4. This procedure applies throughout the term of the project.

§5. Completed projects for which no more expenses can be justified pursuant to article 17 §3 are definitively settled on the basis of the submitted financial reports and, if applicable, the project audit by the auditor of the FWO.

Art. 24.

Justification/audit

§1 System audit

The host institutions submit the auditor's report on the audited annual accounts of the past financial year to the FWO each year before April 30.

§2. Overall reconciliation FWO projects

Before March 15, each host institution submits to the FWO a certificate from its own independent auditor on the past financial year, stating that, without taking into account the awarded and charged 6% overhead (if applicable), the expenditure reported to the FWO via the financial reports, corresponds with the accounting records of the host institution.

§3. Project audit

As from 2016, for projects from €450,000 an on-site audit is conducted by the independent auditor of the FWO at the end of the project. The audit forms the basis for the final settlement. The independent auditor of the FWO has to confirm whether the financial reporting to the FWO represents a fair account of the use of the resources. The audit by the independent auditor is conducted in accordance with the standards and recommendations of the institute of independent auditors. The independent auditor of the FWO shall, upon request, be granted access to all documents that he/she deems necessary to perform the audit task. The costs of these audits are borne by the FWO.
In addition, each year a considerable number of projects will be selected at random by the FWO. These projects, too, will be audited on-site by the independent auditor of the FWO. The number of project audits per year per host institution is limited to maximum 30% of the number of projects.

§4. Random audit

The FWO administration will randomly request and audit documents, including salary slips, during the term of the projects. These documents can be transmitted electronically. The requested supporting documents will then be reconciled with the project application file. The requested documents shall be forwarded to the FWO within 3 months. This procedure will be maintained until the final closure of the project.

If the random audits reveal significant gaps for projects carried out at a host institution, the FWO may instruct its independent auditor to perform a project audit also for projects of less than €450,000, in accordance with the provisions of Article 24, paragraph 3.

The host institution shall in any case retain a right of reply and may, in support of its case, grant the independent auditor of FWO access to the records of its independent auditor. The purpose of these procedures is to avoid double audits.

Art. 25.

Non-submission or late submission of the reports and certificates, as referred to in articles 23 and 24, will result in suspension of the payments.

General financial provisions


Under no circumstances can expenditure be charged to grants awarded for future financial years. This also implies that invoices dated before the start date of the contract shall not be accepted.

Art. 27.

The management of the awarded grants is entrusted to the accounting department of the university or the scientific institution to which the supervisors are affiliated.

Art. 28.

The financial year begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December.

Final provision
Art. 29.

For any cases not provided for in these regulations, reference shall be made to the regulations and case law of the Research Foundation - Flanders.

21/09/2016

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