

Guidelines for candidates and host institutions

The purpose of the Odysseus programme is to provide outstanding researchers who have built up a career outside Belgium with a 5-year start-up funding in order to develop a research group or set up a research line at a Flemish university - possibly in collaboration with another or other Flemish research organisations.

The FWO opens the new call for Odysseus projects **from 3 April 2024 to 30 September 2024**. Following the 2019-2020 and recent 2023-2024 optimisation and reforms within this channel, the FWO offers candidates and their host institutions this step-by-step plan and these guidelines.

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

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

STEP 1: Nomination by university (internal selection)

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

In each application, a local co-supervisor needs to be identified. The local co-supervisor is a senior academic staff member (ZAP) with a permanent position and takes up an administrative role rather than an active scientific role. The local co-supervisor is not supposed to supervise or co-execute the proposed research, but e.g. to ensure the embedding of the Odysseus applicant in the host institution/department/faculty/research group. In case the Odysseus applicant renounces the Odysseus project during the 5 year project period, the local co-supervisor will be responsible for handling commitments (e.g. recruited staff on the Odysseus project) made by the Odysseus grantee.

Moreover, make sure to definitely check [the most recent changes](#) in the Odysseus regulations.

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

When? Internal timelines and deadlines of the universities.

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

What? Candidacy to be submitted in English via a unique web link provided by the Research Coordination Office (DOC) (see example of application form [at webpage below](#)). Important: candidate is required to attach a declaration of commitment signed both by the rector and by the head of department or faculty (see [guidelines for declaration of commitment](#)). In the absence of such a binding declaration of commitment, the application shall be declared ineligible. Besides the above-mentioned declaration of commitment, the submission should also include two letters of recommendation. Please also make sure to update your online [FWO E-portal](#) profile, including an overview of obtained degrees, past and current occupations, and a detailed publication list.

Who? Candidate completes application via web link provided by university (Research Coordination Office). Final submission will be done by host institution itself.

When? Before 30 September 2024, 17:00 (Belgian time). Please be aware that internal deadline of host institution needs to be respected.

STEP 3: Eligibility check

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

Who? FWO administration.

When? After the deadline, until (end of) October 2024.

STEP 4: International external peer review

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

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

Who? FWO and ESF-Science Connect.

When? October 2024-January 2025.

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

What? The available budget of 18.8 million EUR is expected to allow the funding of around 9 Odysseus projects. It was therefore decided to invite max. 40 candidates for an interview.

If there are more than 20 eligible applications of either Type, a pre-selection, based on the 4 submitted recommendations from the external referees for each candidacy, will take place whereby an ad hoc multidisciplinary international jury (same jury members as in step 6) selects the candidates to be invited for an interview.

Who? FWO and international high-level jury.

When? End of February 2025, upon conclusion of external peer review.

STEP 6: Interview by international high-level jury

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

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

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

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

When? 20th and 21st of March 2025.

STEP 7: Ratification by FWO Board of Trustees

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

Who? FWO Board of Trustees.

When? Beginning of April 2025.

STEP 8: Confirmation of inclusion for Odysseus funding

What? Successful candidates who are awarded an Odysseus project confirm as soon as possible to the FWO whether they will or will not make use of the awarded funding and appointment. The confirmation must also include, after close consultation with the involved host institution(s), the official start date of the Odysseus project, possibly up to one year after announcement of the results (for more information see step 9). Importantly, when a successful candidate decides not to make use of the awarded funding, an alternate candidate will be selected (based on the ranking compiled by the high-level jury).

Who? Candidate.

When? Before 1 December 2025.

STEP 9: Start of Odysseus project

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

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

When? Appointed Odysseus researchers can start up to 1 year after the date of announcement of the results (from May 1 2025 until April 1 2026 the latest). The Odysseus project can only start on the first of each month.