

Order No 19/2019
of the Director of the National Science Centre
amending the detailed procedure for evaluating proposals by the Expert Teams
introduced by Order No 55/2018
of 7 March 2019

Pursuant to Article 30 (3) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 947) and pursuant to Article 2 (3) of the Organisational Regulations of the National Science Centre's Office and according to the tasks of the Scientific Coordinators of the National Science Centre laid down in Order No 15/2019 of 11 February 2019, it is hereby decided as follows:

§ 1

The detailed procedure for evaluating proposals by the Expert Teams attached as Annex 1 to Order No 55/2018 of the Director of the National Science Centre of 12 October 2018 shall be amended as follows:

1. The following letters a. and b. shall be added to § 9 (1) (1):
 - a. *Eligibility check consists in:*
 - i. *verification of the proposal's completeness;*
 - ii. *verification whether the proposal meets all the eligibility criteria set forth in the call announcement;*
 - iii. *verification whether the expenditures planned conform to the principles set forth by the Council in the call documentation.*
 - b. *The merit-based evaluation shall be open only to proposals approved as eligible by the Coordinator.*
2. § 9 (3) (2) (b) shall read as follows:

b. appraisal by the Committee based on an interview with the principal investigator carried out by the Committee members:

 - *the principal investigator shall be notified of the interview by the Coordinator no later than 14 days before its forecasted date;*
 - *the Coordinator shall provide the principal investigator with the Experts' opinions on the proposal no later than 7 days before the interview;*
 - *the principal investigator shall be interviewed in Polish or in English at the registered office of the National Science Centre. The language of the interview shall depend on the terms of the call and composition of the Committee. In the MAESTRO call, the interview shall be held in English;*
 - *in exceptional well-justified cases, the National Science Centre shall allow for an interview to be held via available telecommunications tools. A remote interview shall be conducted on the principal investigator's responsibility and at his/her risk;*
 - *failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call.*
3. § 9 (4) (2) shall read as follows:
 - 2) *at **stage II**, the proposals shall be subject to:*
 - a) ***an appraisal by the Team based on an interview with a scholarship candidate carried out by Team members;***

- a scholarship candidate shall be notified of the interview by the Coordinator no later than 14 days before its forecast date;
 - the Coordinator shall provide the candidate with the Experts' opinions on the proposal no later than 7 days before the interview;
 - a candidate shall be interviewed in English at the registered office of the National Science Centre;
 - in exceptional and well-justified cases, the National Science Centre shall allow for an interview to be held via available telecommunications tools. A remote interview shall be conducted on a candidate's own responsibility and at his/her risk;
 - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
- b) **the Team's verdict delivered at the second meeting** consisting in discussing the results of the interview and drafting a ranking short list.

4. § 12 shall read as follows:

1. All proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussion at Team meetings.
2. The cost estimate may not be modified.
3. In the OPUS, PRELUDIUM, SONATA and HARMONIA calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score based on Experts' individual reviews.
4. In the ETIUDA, SONATINA and UWERTURA calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' individual reviews and, additionally, evaluation of interviews.
5. In the SONATA BIS and MAESTRO calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' individual reviews and, additionally, after an interview, the Team shall pass recommendations for proposals: A. Proposal recommended for funding; B. Proposal recommended in the second place; C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
6. The final grade of the proposal shall be its position on a ranking long list or ranking short list, as agreed by the Team. The final grade of the proposal shall be based on the analysis of the proposal for all individual criteria and discussions on the proposal as compared to other proposals reviewed under the call.
7. The score shall not be binding upon the Team and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussions on the final evaluation. The Team may agree on score-based evaluations.
8. The reviews by the external Experts at stage II of merit-based evaluation shall not be binding upon the Team, albeit the Team members must address them. While settling the proposal's final grade, the Team may fully agree with the external Expert's evaluation, partly agree with it, or disagree with it. Disagreement with the external Expert's evaluation must be accounted for.
9. A proposal which has been given a score of zero by the consulted decision of the Expert Team in at least one criterion or whose evaluation form contains a consulted negative answer to any of the questions therein, cannot be recommended for funding.
10. If the Team cannot find a common position on the evaluation of a proposal, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority.
11. Ranking long lists and ranking short lists must be approved by an absolute majority vote.
12. The Team may conditionally recommend one proposal for funding, which is partially within the limit of resources available for a specific call under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines.

13. *The decision on funding the proposals referred to in the section above, shall be made by the NCN Director, who takes into account the percentage rate of exceeding the budget available for a call under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines.*
14. *The Team is not required to distribute the whole funding available nor can it recommend funding proposals that exceed the available funding, with the reservation of section 12.*

§ 2

1. The consolidated text of the Detailed procedure for evaluating proposals by the Expert Teams is attached hereto as Annex 1.

§ 3

1. The Order shall enter into effect on the date of signing.

§ 1.

The Order lays down the detailed procedure for evaluating proposals submitted to OPUS, PRELUDIUM, MAESTRO, HARMONIA, SONATINA, SONATA, SONATA BIS, UWERTURA and ETIUDA calls by the Expert Teams.

§ 2.

Whenever this Order refers to:

- 1) Centre, it shall be understood as the National Science Centre (NCN);
- 2) Council, it shall be understood as the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director, it shall be understood as the NCN Director;
- 4) Coordinator, it shall be understood as the NCN's Coordinator in charge of a research domain;
- 5) Team, it shall be understood as an Expert Team:
 - a) Panel Team, it shall be understood as a Team appointed for each panel defined by an applicable resolution of the Council, i.e. falling under the domains of: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HS), Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST), and Life Sciences (NZ);
 - b) Inter-Panel Team, it shall be understood as an Expert Team appointed under a given research domain, i.e. HS, ST or NZ;
 - c) Inter-Domain Team, it shall be understood as an Expert Team comprising Experts representing different research domains, i.e. HS, ST and NZ;
- 6) Expert, it shall be understood as a Team member or an external Expert who is not a Team member;
- 7) Committee, it shall be understood as a group of Experts, composed of the Team members, interviewing candidates at the second stage of merit-based evaluation of research proposals in the calls where such an interview is required by the Centre's terms and conditions of funding research tasks;
- 8) proposal, it shall be understood as a proposal submitted in response to calls published by the NCN;
- 9) meeting, it shall be understood as an individual day in a Team's or Committee's session;
- 10) session, it shall be understood as all meetings of a Team or a Committee at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation process;
- 11) edition, it shall be understood as all calls launched by the Centre with deadlines expiring on the same date;
- 12) ranking long list, it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals approved for the second stage of evaluation;
- 13) ranking short list, it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals recommended for funding.

§ 3. General Provisions

- 1) Expert Team members shall be selected by the Council pursuant to the Council Resolution No 26/2018 of 8 March 2018 “Expert Teams of the National Science Centre: Formation and Appointment,” and appointed by the NCN Director.
- 2) The Expert Teams shall be appointed for each call, and they may carry out evaluation of proposals submitted under one or several types of calls, to a particular panel (Panel Teams) or to a group of panels (Inter-Panel and Inter-Domain Teams).
- 3) The number of Team members and composition of the Team shall be decided upon by the Council, considering the number and subject of proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call in a timely and orderly manner. A Team shall consist of at least five members.
- 4) The work of an Expert Team shall be managed by a Chair, appointed by the Council.
- 5) During the meetings, a Team’s Chair may appoint another member of the Team to manage the work of the Team in his/her stead. Should the Team’s Chair be unable to appoint such a person, the oldest member of the Team shall manage the work of the Team in his/her stead.
- 6) The Experts shall be bound by the ethical principles laid down in the “Code of Ethics for Members of the Council and Experts of the National Science Centre,” annexed to the NCN Council Resolution No 22/2017 of 9 February 2017.
- 7) The Coordinator shall exclude an Expert from the proposal evaluation procedure in the event of a conflict of interest or justified suspicion of a bias in the Expert’s actions.

§ 4. Expert Teams

The duties of the Teams shall include:

- 1) evaluation of research proposals;
- 2) compilation of a ranking long list and ranking short list of projects under a given call.

§ 5. Coordinator

1. The duties of the Coordinator shall include:
 - 1) running eligibility checks on proposals;
 - 2) indicating the Team members to carry out individual evaluations in the event of the Chair experiencing a conflict of interest;
 - 3) organising Team and Committee meetings, including:
 - a) summoning meetings and participating in them;
 - b) verifying the conformity of the meeting minutes with the actual course of the meetings and resolutions of the Committees or Teams;
 - 4) indicating external Experts for the evaluation of proposals at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation, taking into account the candidacies put forward by the Team members;
 - 5) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of the opinions drafted by the Experts; and
 - 6) presenting the Director with the ranking lists prepared by the Teams for approval.
2. The Coordinator shall organise the Team’s work and work in close cooperation with the Chair of the Team.

§ 6. Chair of the Expert Team

1. The duties of the Chair of the Team include:
 - 1) indicating the Team members to perform individual reviews at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation, with the exception of the situation described in § 5 (1) (2);
 - 2) chairing the Team’s meetings, taking account of the situation described in § 3 (5);
 - 3) conducting voting;

- 4) approving the minutes from the Team's meetings;
2. The Chair of the Team shall work in close cooperation with the Coordinator.

§ 7. Expert Team Member

1. The duties of a Team Member include:
 - 1) drafting individual reviews of proposals allotted by the Chair of the Team or the Coordinator at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and presenting them during the first session;
 - 2) participating in the Team meetings, as well as:
 - a) drafting justifications for the final grades of the proposals they have been assigned during the Team's meetings;
 - b) putting forward the candidacies of at least five external Experts to review each proposal he/she reviewed at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and which has been approved for the second stage of evaluation;
 - c) presenting the individual reviews by external Experts regarding the proposals they have been assigned during the second session; and
 - d) participating in the work of the Committee at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation.

§ 8. External Expert

1. The duties of an external Expert shall include performing individual reviews of proposals at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation of proposals.
2. An external Expert may not be a member of the Team evaluating a given proposal.

§ 9. Proposal Evaluation Stages

1. Proposals shall be subject to eligibility check and merit-based evaluation:
 - 1) eligibility check shall be performed by Coordinators:
 - a. eligibility check consists in:
 - iv. verification of the proposal's completeness;
 - v. verification whether the proposal meets all the eligibility criteria set forth in the call announcement;
 - vi. verification whether the expenditures planned conform to the principles set forth by the Council in the call documentation.
 - b. The merit-based evaluation shall be open only to proposals approved as eligible by the Coordinator.
 - 2) merit-based evaluation shall be carried out by the Teams. A proposal may also be rejected on formal grounds at a later stage of evaluation.
2. The merit-based evaluation of research proposals (OPUS, PRELUDIUM, SONATA and HARMONIA) shall be carried out in two stages:
 - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo a **qualification check**, based on the data included in the proposal and the attachments thereto, with an exception of the full description of the research project. The qualification check shall consist in:
 - a) **individual reviews** drafted by two Team members working independently;
 - b) **Team's verdict delivered at the first meeting** consisting in discussing the individual reviews and drafting a ranking long list;
 - approved for the second stage are proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for a given call under particular disciplines or group of disciplines;

- 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist evaluation**, based on the data included in the proposal and the attachments thereto, excluding the short description of the research project. The specialist evaluation shall consist in:
 - a) **individual reviews** drafted by at least two external Experts working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for well-justified cases. The cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
 - b) **Team's verdict delivered at the second meeting** consisting in discussing the individual reviews and drafting a ranking short list.

3. The merit-based evaluation of research proposals (SONATINA, SONATA BIS, MAESTRO) shall be carried out in two stages:
 - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo a **qualification** check, based on the data included in the proposal and the attachments thereto, with an exception of the full description of the research project. The qualification check shall consist in:
 - a) **individual reviews** drafted by two Team members working independently;
 - b) **Team's verdict delivered at the first meeting** consisting in discussing the individual reviews and drafting a ranking long list;
 - approved for the second stage are proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for a given call under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines;
 - 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist** evaluation, based on the data included in the proposal and the attachments thereto, with an exception of the short description of the research project. The specialist evaluation shall consist in:
 - a) **individual reviews** drafted by at least two external Experts working independently; Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for well-justified cases. The cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
 - b) **appraisal by the Committee based on an interview with the principal investigator** carried out by the Committee members:
 - the principal investigator shall be notified of the interview by the Coordinator no later than 14 days before its forecasted date;;
 - the Coordinator shall provide the principal investigator with the Experts' opinions on the proposal no later than 7 days before the interview;
 - the principal investigator shall be interviewed in Polish or in English at the registered office of the National Science Centre. The language of the interview shall depend on the terms of the call and composition of the Committee. In the MAESTRO call, the interview shall be held in English;
 - in exceptional well-justified cases, the National Science Centre shall allow for an interview to be held via available telecommunications tools. A remote interview shall be conducted on the principal investigator's responsibility and at his/her risk;
 - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
 - c) **Team's verdict delivered at the second meeting** consisting in discussing the individual reviews, the results of the interview and drafting a ranking short list.

4. Merit-based evaluation of applications for funding of fellowships in foreign institutions under the UWERTURA call shall be carried out in two stages:
 - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo a **qualification** check, based on the data included in the proposal and the attachments thereto as well as the description of the research project. The qualification check shall consist in:
 - a) **individual reviews** drafted by two Team members working independently;

§ 10. Expert Team Meetings

1. The number of Team meetings planned within a single session should be established with regard to the number of proposals to be reviewed and the volume of work necessary for their evaluation.
2. On having completed individual reviews, the Expert shall be given electronic access to all the other individual reviews performed within the Team by other Experts.
3. A Team meeting shall be held in the presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Team's members.
4. The meetings of a Team shall be chaired by its Chair or Team member appointed as his or her substitute.
5. A Coordinator and recording clerk shall participate in every Team meeting but shall not take part in the voting.
6. The Team members who have a conflict of interest with applicants (or investigators) shall have to leave the meeting room. Exclusion of a Team member on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum when voting.
7. The recording clerk shall keep the minutes. The minutes shall be verified for conformity with the meeting by the Coordinator and approved by the Chair of the Team.

§ 11. Committee Meetings

1. In order to interview candidates, Committees shall be formed, composed of the Team members evaluating proposals at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation.
2. The number of Committees shall depend on the number of proposals approved for the second stage of the merit-based evaluation and the number of Team's members.
3. A Committee shall comprise at least five Team members.
4. A Committee meeting shall be held in the presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Committee members.
5. A Coordinator and recording clerk shall participate in every Committee meeting.
6. The Committee members who have a conflict of interest with applicants (or investigators) shall have to leave the meeting room. Exclusion of a Committee member on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum when voting.
7. The recording clerk shall keep the minutes of the Committee meeting, which shall be annexed with the minutes of the Team meeting.

§ 12. Principles of Evaluating Proposals at the Team Meetings

1. All proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussion at Team meetings.
2. The cost estimate may not be modified.
3. In the OPUS, PRELUDIUM, SONATA and HARMONIA calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score based on Experts' individual reviews.
4. In the ETIUDA, SONATINA and UWERTURA calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' individual reviews and, additionally, evaluation of interviews.
5. In the SONATA BIS and MAESTRO calls, at each stage of evaluation the proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' individual reviews and, additionally, after an interview, the Team shall pass recommendations for proposals: A. Proposal recommended for funding; B. Proposal recommended in the second place; C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
6. The final grade of the proposal shall be its position on a ranking long list or ranking short list, as agreed by the Team. The final grade of the proposal shall be based on the analysis of the proposal for all individual criteria and discussions on the proposal as compared to other proposals reviewed under the call.

7. The score shall not be binding upon the Team and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussions on the final evaluation. The Team may agree on score-based evaluations.
8. The reviews by the external Experts at stage II of merit-based evaluation shall not be binding upon the Team, albeit the Team members must address them. While settling the proposal's final grade, the Team may fully agree with the external Expert's evaluation, partly agree with it, or disagree with it. Disagreement with the external Expert's evaluation must be accounted for.
9. A proposal which has been given a score of zero by the consulted decision of the Expert Team in at least one criterion or whose evaluation form contains a consulted negative answer to any of the questions therein, cannot be recommended for funding.
10. If the Team cannot find a common position on the evaluation of a proposal, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority.
11. Ranking long lists and ranking short lists must be approved by an absolute majority vote.
12. The Team may conditionally recommend one proposal for funding, which is partially within the limit of resources available for a specific call under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines.
13. The decision on funding the proposals referred to in the section above, shall be made by the NCN Director, who takes into account the percentage rate of exceeding the budget available for a call under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines.
14. The Team is not required to distribute the whole funding available nor can it recommend funding proposals that exceed the available funding, with the reservation of section 12.

§ 13. Ranking List

1. The Coordinator shall present the Director with ranking lists drafted by the Teams.
2. In exceptional cases, the Coordinator, having consulted the Team, may modify the order of projects on a ranking list, pursuant to Article 24 (2) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 947). The modification procedure shall be as follows:
 - 1) the consultation may have the form of circulating a query to all Team members with a justification of suggested modification and fixed time for their response;
 - 2) after the time fixed for the response the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from the Team members;
 - 3) no response on a Team member's part within the fixed time shall be deemed as his or her negative position on the suggested modification.
3. In the event referred to in section 2, the Coordinator shall provide the Director with the modified ranking list together with a written justification, for his approval.

This document is not a certified translation and has been prepared for your convenience. In the case of any doubts as to the interpretation of its provisions, the Polish version shall prevail.