

AGAUR OTM-R DOCUMENT

This document is aimed to describe the Agency and its procedures in relation to a Transparent, Open and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R).

1

1. Description.

The Agency for Management of Universities and Research Grants (AGAUR) is a public funding body within the Secretariat of Universities and Research, Ministry of Enterprise and Knowledge of the Government of Catalonia. AGAUR supports the Government University and scientific policy, which is based on competitiveness in R&D with excellence at the core, by funding people and capacity building.

With over 15 years of experience, AGAUR runs annually scholarships and grants amounting 170 million EUR, which contribute to the promotion of university education, research and knowledge transfer in Catalonia. AGAUR obtained the quality certification ISO 9001:2008 for its grant management performance in 2012 and the European 'HR excellence seal' in 2014.

Its internationalization area develops activities to support the Directorate General for Research in strategic international programs; to foster wider research cooperation and researchers' mobility with other countries/regions; to promote the external relations of Catalan institutions and facilitate talent attraction; to attract European funds for research; to support and enable R&I agents in project management and valorization of research.

2. Object of the grants.

The object of the grants and scholarships which are managed by AGAUR is the execution of actions established by the policy makers' decisions on programs of grants and scholarships, loans, subsidies from the Government of Catalonia; as well as other activities for the promotion of university education, scientific and technical research and technological innovation in Catalonia and other actions or measures targeting the promotion of activities of public utility or social interest or the promotion of a public purpose.

3. Period.

The period in which the activities or projects should be executed is determined in the legal framework of the respective calls for applications.

4. Parties involved (definitions).

- Beneficiaries: Eligible beneficiaries are natural or legal persons, public or private, or groupings. Thereof, there are no prohibitions for eligibility as a beneficiary according to the article 13 of Law 38/2003, of November 17, General for Subsidies, who should carry out the

activity substantiating the award or when the circumstances envisaged in the regulations and in the call for applications concur, and how to proceed in evaluation and selection provided that their application is within the budget credits allocated to each one of the calls for applications and that they carry out the activity on which the award of the grant is based. The beneficiaries of the grant must accredit concurrence of the requirements established in the call for applications on submitting the application; otherwise, the call for applications must specify this expressly.

- Applicant: Natural or legal person who has to submit the application in the place and the form established in the call for applications will have the condition of applicant. Manager: Natural or legal person acting as the recipient of the public funds awarded and who has been commissioned with transferring these funds to the beneficiaries in the form established by the corresponding call for applications.

5. Calls for Applications.

The AGAUR's Management Board is the body with competence for approving the regulations of the grants and scholarships and its interpretation. It is the organ with competence for issuing the different calls for applications published in the DOGC (official bulletin), which must include at least:

- a) The object, conditions and the purpose of the grant or scholarship. The objectives; the application assessment criteria and, as applicable, their deliberation; The requirements; The documents and the information that should be attached to the application, and the deadline for submitting it; The deadline for the submission of applications may be extended when the AGAUR's Board of Management or the president of the Executive Commission, perceive there is concurrence of exceptional circumstances that render it advisable.
- b) Grant or scholarship award procedure.
- c) The maximum amount allocated, indicating the budget year to which the expense should be allocated.
- d) The possibility or not for subcontracting partial execution of the activity which is the object of the subsidy. By default, the maximum percentage permitted for subcontracting the activity granted will be 50%, unless the call for applications excludes this possibility or indicates another percentage.
- e) The possibility of making advanced payments on the grant or scholarship awarded in the terms provided for in these regulations.
- f) The organ with competence for planning, the instruction of the call for applications and the term for granting.

g) The means of notification of the decision and whether or not it exhausts the administrative procedure, indicating the appeals and the organs before which the appeals may be lodged.

h) If necessary, the criteria for assessing degrees of possible non-fulfilments of conditions imposed in the award of grants or scholarships.

3

6. Dissemination.

AGAUR advertises and publishes in open, transparent and accessible ways the information about calls to reach targeted populations of junior experienced researchers, paying particular attention to accessibility, gender, and career-break issues, migration/refugee issues, and the attraction of talent from Third Countries through different channels:

- **Official publication:** all calls are published in the Official Journal of the Government of Catalonia (DOGC) publicly available and easily accessible through the Government of Catalonia website.
- **AGAUR website:** a specific scholarships & grants webpage (agaur.gencat.cat) provides information about the calls, evaluation criteria, selection process and results.
- **Secretary for Universities and Research website** (<http://universitatsirecerca.gencat.cat/>) and **the Catalan Government Secretariat for Foreign and European Union Affairs website** (<http://afersexteriors.gencat.cat/>).
- **EURAXESS jobs:** the HR fellowship programmes are announced. AGAUR also disseminates information from the local contact points [Euraxess Catalonia network](#), formed by more than 50 affiliated Catalan organizations.
- **Social networks:** social community's sites (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) – with more than 50,000 followers altogether¹.
- **Distribution lists:** information about the calls within AGAUR's distribution lists for dissemination purposes, with more than 22.000 people, including national and international contacts.
- **Targeted audiences:** info days with specific information on calls are organized once the call is about to open.
- **International dissemination:** active participation through leaflets or posters in international conferences, such as ESOF, EARMA, VITAE & STS Forum (Japan).

7. Applications.

Applications are formalized according to a standard template and should be addressed to the president of the competent organ to issue a decision, in the place and the form established in each call for applications by means of the procedures provided for in the Law 39/2015 on the legal system of the public administrations and common administrative procedure. The applications are submitted through the Open Administration of Catalonia platform (hereinafter AOC).

8. Assessment and selection.

The criteria and mechanisms of assessment and selection of the grant or a scholarship are specified

¹ All the links are available at: <http://universitatsirecerca.gencat.cat/ca/actualitat/xarxes-socials/>. Among others: [twitter](#) (@recercat; @universitatcat; @coneixementcat; @euraxesscat); [facebook](#) (recercat; universitatcat), etc.



in the corresponding call for applications. The general principles applied in the evaluation and selection of the applications of all AGAUR calls for applications are objectivity, independence and quality of the evaluations.

The selection of the applications corresponds to a commission appointed by the president of the organ with competence for resolving them or the person delegated by the latter. The composition of this commission will be determined specifically in each one of the calls for applications. The commission will issue a deed of its deliberations and will refer its proposal to the organ with competence for it to issue a decision. These commissions may enjoy the assessment of evaluation organs or external experts, which may interview the applicants to obtain complementary information and ask for further information to be furnished. These commissions should draft stand-by lists of the applicants that did not receive an award, if the call for applications provides this possibility and for the determination of possible replacements.

9. Evaluation.

In accordance with AGAUR's general evaluation regulations, the general principles governing the evaluation activities are objectivity, independence and quality of evaluations within a fast and effective public-funded management framework that AGAUR brings to all its actions, which are publicly available through its webpage.

9.1. Selection criteria: specific evaluation criteria and threshold are mentioned in each AGAUR open call, established to meet the goals established in the planning and in the specific call.

It ensures that applications do not infringe any ethical basis, which is a reason for exclusion from selection or evaluation process.

AGAUR also prevents any bias based on gender differences in the evaluation and selection activities. Among other aspects, AGAUR ensures that the selection committees observe gender parity.

Further assessment activities may be developed at different levels and time in order to ensure whether public resources are being used appropriately

9.2 Evaluators: AGAUR's evaluation and selection rules require the involvement of independent experts to evaluate in a peer-review basis that the submitted applications ensure that meet the requirements. The selection of these experts is based on their recent scientific career. They belong to different science fields, university and industrial areas, with experience and high level in their area of expertise, well-known as international experts in their subject matter, and capable of understanding applications in Catalan language, if the call does not indicate any other.

Expert evaluators from the Catalan Public Universities are selected taking into account their number of research steps accrued. On the other hand, those who are not in public universities are selected primarily on the basis of minimum bibliometric criteria, established by AGAUR, which characterize each area of expertise (number of documents and citations).

Information and details of evaluators are kept in a database, in an electronic file maintained by AGAUR, which is periodically updated. The database includes at least a full CV of each evaluator, as well as information about his or her area of expertise and key words. AGAUR ensures gender balance among evaluations.

Any individual with the necessary skills and abilities who is not previously included in the database described above may submit an evaluation proposal anytime.

9.3 Assignment: the selection is made using a random selection process which optimally assigns applications to each evaluator from the database. This process is based on a computerized procedure that ensures transparency at all levels of awarding and a balance and homogeneity in evaluation task, including gender equality whenever possible. In addition, the system ensures that evaluators are not over-burdened with work by assigning them no more than 10 files to each one, avoiding conflict of interest. An evaluator from a particular institution cannot evaluate research staff from the same institution. Assignment in successive evaluation processes will be governed by the principle of rotation, whenever possible.

If the random computerized procedure does not assign evaluators to all applications, they are manually selected under the supervision of the evaluation advisory staff.

9.4 Conflict of interest and confidentiality: All proposed evaluators must complete document of statements before evaluating, stating that they have no conflict of interest with the applications to be evaluated and they undertake to keep confidentiality of information available to them for the evaluation purpose. By means of this document evaluators authorize AGAUR to periodically disclose their identity on an aggregated basis. This document shall remain valid as long as evaluators are working for AGAUR.

The evaluation of applications is always carried out on the basis of fulfilment of the criteria and requirements set out in the call. The evaluation never begins before the deadline for submitting applications expires and before documentation is requested.

Firstly, AGAUR checks the eligibility information and format of the application. If there are no administrative defects that lead to the application's exclusion, a period of 10 days is open for requesting complementary information, if deemed necessary.

All applications are usually classified by section for being allocated to the corresponding evaluators. Each section has a coordinator who determines the thematic suitability in the selection of the evaluation team.

Key words in a standardized way are used as a means of classifying applications and for the assignment of the evaluation experts. In this sense, an agreement with Termcat and the Catalan Universities to create a thesaurus of key words is implemented. This classification replaces or complements the classification by areas of expertise in the calls for research and improves the assignment of the evaluation experts.

9.5 Key figures: The different elements and people which take part of the evaluation process as follows:

- Call. A set of rules or regulations that define the procedure for granting by competitive tendering.
- Candidates or applicants. Natural or legal person who are involved in a call for scholarships and grants.
- Management Staff. Responsible for receiving applications from candidates and processing them adequately among the different elements of the selection process, in accordance with the specific call and the applicable regulations. The Area of Evaluation and Research Analysis staff are responsible for processing and ensuring the evaluation process, as well as proposing and carrying out all actions required to improve it.
- Evaluation experts. Independent experts selected on the basis of their research career, with no conflict of interest and bound by a commitment of confidentiality and who assess the quality of candidates and applications.
- Section Coordinator. A renowned expert, appointed by the President of the Executive Committee of Research Grants (CEAR) for certain representative sections, such as Sciences, Life Sciences, Health and Medical Sciences, Social Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Humanities, and Knowledge Transfer, who submit to the Selection Committee, together with the Management Staff, a consensus-based proposal of the evaluations made by the Evaluation team depending on budget availability in the calls. The main tasks and functions of this figure are as follows:
 - To review or monitor the specific evaluation process of each call.
 - To take decisions or propose solutions in case of divergent evaluations.
 - To assess the evaluators.
 - To recommend improvements for the calls and the evaluation procedure.
 - To review the previous procedure if appeals are lodged.

The Section Coordinators are selected by the General Director for Research, from a shortlist of three candidates proposed by the AGAUR's Executive Director, which ensures the scientific quality criteria and the understanding of the system necessary to carry out this task. The Section Coordinators are appointed for a period of two years, which can be extended up to a maximum of five years.

- Selection Committee. A collegiate body, whose composition is defined in the call text, which proposes the decision on awarding scholarships and grants to the President of the corresponding executive grant Commission, on the basis of evaluation reports by the Section Coordinators and the Management team.

AGAUR's assessment procedure, is carried out on peer-review basis with at least two evaluations for each application. As a general rule, the Evaluation team is composed by two people who will assess each application. One of them done by an expert linked professionally to Catalonia and another one by an evaluator from outside the Catalan science and technology system. They cannot belong to the same institution as the application being evaluated. In the case of evaluations that are significantly divergent (25% of small difference) the corresponding Section Coordinator, on the basis of the considerations of the evaluation team though AGAUR's Management Staff, may propose a third evaluation to solve the previous doubts.

9.6 Scoring Scale: The final scoring system of the evaluations is based on the sum of the different values obtained for each of the criteria blocks evaluated. The aggregate total has a value between 1 and 7 (and one-tenth). These evaluation criteria and thresholds are further defined for each call.

The Evaluation expert's team rate a numerical evaluation of the different blocks evaluated, together with qualitative remarks which must be consistent with the expressed score. The qualitative evaluation is compulsory and may be used to justify the scores obtained to the applicants, as appropriate.

AGAUR provides evaluation guidelines of the call in question to the experts, in order to define the object and the criteria of the call and to ensure a maximum coherence between the evaluators acting individually.

The Section Coordinators meet to achieve a consensus based on the evaluation final scores and budget availability and prepare a proposal to submit to the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee, taking into account the quality and suitability of the applications, and in accordance with the criteria explained in the call, will take a consensus that includes the final decision on the proposal, which is forwarded to the President of the corresponding executive grant committee.

In those calls which it's specifically mentioned and in accordance with the AGAUR's general regulations, the Selection Committee determines the members of a prioritized stand-by list of beneficiaries who may become beneficiaries of the grant in the case of waiver or replacement of any of the original beneficiaries.

9.7 Evaluation modalities: By default, the calls for applications should follow the general scheme of the aforementioned evaluation and selection process. This scheme includes a number of features that will be applied to all applications, although some calls may allow the evaluation process to have singularities in the procedure. Evaluation panels are created when the calls requires it. On this basis, always bearing in mind which procedure may be the best one for the evaluation of each call for applications, as well as the above-mentioned general criteria, the applications may be evaluated by means of different techniques such as:

9.8 Peer review: Each application is evaluated by two experts who make their individual assessment. This technique is generally applied to most calls.

9.9 Panel of Evaluators: Creating a panel of evaluators which assess the different applications on a consensus basis or reviews of the previous individual evaluation process already carried out to support the Coordinators. The Panel of evaluators meets together in different sessions. This technique may be more applicable for those calls on specific topics or which only address one area, or those in which the CV of the research staff or the research group has a very relevant specific weight. Whereas in those in which there is a very low number of applications or in highly competitive calls may require a double evaluation phase. The Panel of Evaluators may also complement a simple peer-review in calls in which a comparative vision of all the applications is needed.

9.10 In itinere and ex post evaluation: AGAUR carries out inspection activities on the different calls for applications in order to document and evaluate *in itinere* the development of the different projects or actions for correcting inadequate dynamics, if any.

The assessment of results obtained individually in each action provides very significant information about the research implementation and its impact. Thus ex post evaluation actions of the proposals and the funded projects that take different aspects of this process into account are also introduced:

- The suitability of the obtained results for the target specified in the call for applications.
- The scientific evaluation of results.
- The development of the methodology required to assess the impact of the results at socioeconomic level in the Catalan context.

9.11 Evaluation of the social sciences and humanities: Considering the particularities of these areas of expertise and the demands of the groups that work in them and the different nature of the institutions may require the implementation of various actions to improve the and promote its internationalization and impact. The research tradition in the areas of Catalan studies, particularly, the CARHUS Plus+ project (classification of journals in humanities and social sciences), which updates its data every two years, is also highlighted as a tool to improve assessment processes of journals and the book chapter evaluation project, both of the them with a previous proven track and continuity.

9.12 Disclosure of evaluators: AGAUR's expert evaluators names are disclosed in an aggregate way through AGAUR's website every year, with their previous consens as a purpose of transparency. Similarly, the identification of the Section Coordinators, who are engaged for a two-year period and their tasks, are also published systematically on the website.

9.13 Meta-evaluation and inspection. The general assessment of the experts who work for AGAUR is carried out through mechanisms of reviewing and monitoring of their work, both from the technical and scientific area. This latest review also includes advice and evaluation from the Section Coordinators, both through the assessment of each evaluator, as well as the general assessments that they may provide by different mechanisms created by AGAUR to achieve this goal. AGAUR may commission periodically external assessments of its evaluation processes in order to submit them to the criterion of experts and to improve and adapt them to the context of the Catalan science and technology system.

10. Ethical control

Research activities funded by AGAUR must meet ethical standards. Control systems will be progressively implemented in order to comply with European regulations of Decision 1982/2006/EC, article n. 6.

AGAUR outsources ethical control of the applications to organizations that have already reputation and expertise in the requirements and also delegates the decisions on the Animal Experimentation Committee (CEA).

Applications involving any suspicion of non-fulfilment of any ethical standard will not be funded.



11. Decision

Each call for applications will determine the competent organ for the decision of the calls, as well as the organ with competence for the management and decision of any doubts or incidents that may arise in their implementation. AGAUR's executive director will be responsible for resolving any doubts and incidents that may arise in their implementation, unless provided for otherwise in this call for applications.

The decision of the award or rejection of the grants or scholarships should be justified and contain at least:

- a) The identification of the physical or legal person to whom the grant or scholarship is awarded. In the case of groups of public or private physical or legal persons, without legal personality, this should be stated in the implementation commitments taken on by each member, as well as the amount of subsidy applied to each one of them.
- b) The amount of the grant or scholarship and, as applicable, the items for which they are awarded, as well as the granted percentage of the budget of the activity or the project submitted.
- c) The form of justification of the implementation of the object of the grant or scholarship.
- d) If advances of funds are authorized, their amount and the guarantee which, as applicable, must be presented by the beneficiary of the grant or scholarship.
- e) If the application is rejected, the reason for the refusal.
- f) The stand-by list of unsuccessful applicants, if the call for applications envisages the possibility of replacements.
- g) That notification exhausts administrative procedure, indicating the appeals that may be lodged, the body with which they should be lodged and the term, without prejudice to the possibility of the interested parties lodging any other appeals they deem fitting.

Notification of the decision and publicity: The decision of the award or the rejection of the grant or scholarship, duly justified, will be notified individually to the interested party. The notification may be by electronic means as a preferred medium. The individual notification will be delivered by means of any way that makes it possible for the applicant to have a record of its receipt, within the term of 10 working days as of the date of decision of awarding or rejecting the grant or scholarship. Due to the high volume of the applications, individual notification may be replaced by publication in the DOGC or the AGAUR notice board. The organ with competence for issuing the call must decide whether the notification of the decision in the DOGC or on the notice board damages legitimate rights or interests and must consequently choose the media it deems fitting to protect such rights or interests. The organ with competence for approving the call for applications will agree to the form of notification that will be used and which must figure expressly on the corresponding



resolution. AGAUR's executive director will guarantee the proper execution of the agreements taken for this purpose.

For the purpose of publicity, decisions will be published in the DOGC, provided that the amount of the subsidies individually is 3,000 Euros or more. The beneficiary must indicate the amount awarded, the purpose of the subsidy and the budget to which they have been allocated.

10

Without prejudice to the provisions of the preceding and for the sake of greater dissemination, the call for applications and awards in which individual notification is replaced by publication may be disseminated on AGAUR's web site. If the means of individual notification, it will be also possible to consult its status of the application on the web site, in a personalized basis and for purely informative ends.

12. Acceptance of the grant or scholarship.

The condition of beneficiary is obtained at the time of the acceptance of the grant or scholarship. The acceptance is formalized by means of a standard document that must be signed by the beneficiary, in which the latter undertakes to fulfil all the conditions established in these regulations and in the call for applications of the grant or scholarship.

13. Obligations of the beneficiary.

The beneficiary of the grant or scholarship is obliged to:

- a) Fulfil the conditions of these rules and the specific rules of the call for applications.
- b) Carry out the activity or adopt the behavior that justifies the award of the grant or scholarship and accredit it before the organs with competence in the matter.
- c) Justify the destination of the grant or the fulfilment of the object of the grant pursuant to the provisions of rule 12 of this award decision and within the term determined in the call for applications.
- d) Keep the original receipts or vouchers and all the documentation related to the grant or scholarship for a period of at least five years.
- e) Propose to the organ with competence any matter of change which, in accordance with the applicable legislation, may arise in the destination of the grant or scholarship, without changing its purpose. Changes must be duly authorised by the awarding organ.
- f) Inform the awarding organ any other grants or scholarships requested or awarded for the same purpose, any administrative or occupational contracts or any other form of public or private funding that affect the same activity which is the object of the grant or scholarship and any other alteration already mentioned so that compatibility may be evaluated.

- g) Facilitate all the information required to them by AGAUR, the General Audit Office of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, the Public Audit Office or other organ with competences in accordance with the regulations in force.
- h) Submit to any actions involving verification and control required by the organ with competences of the Administration in accordance with the applicable legislation.
- i) Reimburse funds received in the case of revocation of the subsidy in the terms indicated in the resolution.
- j) Adopt the dissemination measures established by AGAUR.
- k) Leave a record of the receipt and application of the subsidy in the accounts or in the books, which, as the case may be, the beneficiary has to keep in accordance with the applicable business or tax legislation.
- l) Observe the obligations pertaining to subcontracting and to the nature and amount of the eligible expenses in accordance with articles 29 and 31 of Law 38/2003, of November 17, the general subsidies law, and in accordance with those specified indicated in the respective call for applications.
- m) In the case of companies, fulfil the requirements established in articles 32.1, 32.3 and 36.4 of Law 1/1998, of January 7, on language policy, and any provisions issued by the Government of Catalonia in this matter. n) Insurance: if the call for applications in question does not establish the existence of medical coverage and travel insurance, the beneficiaries must take out their own insurance.

14. Incompatibilities.

The grants or scholarships regulated by these rules are incompatible with any other grant, scholarship or fund obtained for the same object, unless the call for applications establishes compatibility, and in the terms indicated in the respective call for applications.

When a grant or scholarship and funding by a public or private organization concur in the same activity, the awarding organization may assess their compatibility, which it will solve expressly. In all such cases, the applicants must submit the standard model declaring with a duly signed declaration of these circumstances.

15. Revocation of the grant or scholarship.

The following causes will constitute grounds for revocation of the grant or scholarship:

- a) Non-fulfilment of the justification obligation, as well as insufficient justification.

- b) Total or partial non-fulfilment of the purposes for which the grant or scholarship was awarded, resulting from the allocation of the amounts received to different purposes.
- c) Obtainment of the grant or scholarship without meeting the required conditions, falsifying the conditions or requirements or concealing any that would have constituted ineligibility.
- d) Non-fulfilment of the conditions imposed on the beneficiaries pursuant to the award, including the obstruction of control activities or resisting the conduct thereof, thus impeding the accreditation of the implementation of the grant.
- e) When the amount of the grant awarded is such that, either in isolation or concurrently with others, it surpasses the cost of the activity to be developed by the beneficiary though the surplus obtained over the cost of the activity developed.
- f) Non-fulfilment of the provisions of these rules or of any other requirement established in the call for applications.

ANNEX

AGAUR's EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

