

NEUES ENTDECKEN
TALENTE FÖRDERN
IDEEN UMSETZEN

FWF

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

In accordance with its [Funding Guidelines](#) of 1 January 2021
(as last amended), the FWF has issued the following

Application Guidelines for the START Programme



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1. General Information

1.1. Aim of the programme

The fundamental aim of the programme is the promotion of young researchers with at least two and at most eight years of postdoctoral experience who have already produced scientific/scholarly work of a top international standard and whose research careers to date make it likely that they will continue to perform first-rate research in the future.

Top-class research is the result of teamwork by top-class people. The project funding, which amounts between €800,000 up to €1.2 Mio is designed to provide financial security for a period of six years and to enable project leaders to independently build up or consolidate and lead research groups, thereby qualifying themselves for senior research positions (especially as university professors within Austria or abroad).

The programme is targeted at highly qualified researchers of any discipline. There are no quotas regulating the distribution of awards between subject areas. Priority will be given to applicants, who are in an early stage of their career and have not yet received any third-party funding in programmes with similar aims and comparable funding amounts¹, e.g. „ERC Starting Grants“.

The START-programme is one of the most generously supported research programmes for individual researchers working in Austria. As such, it attracts considerable media attention and thus contributes significantly to the understanding and acceptance of scientific research by society.

1.2. Submission

Applications must be submitted in English via the electronic application portal [elane](#) by **20th September 2021 (13:59 CEST)**.

Once the application has been submitted online, a PDF cover sheet will be generated. The application shall not be considered officially submitted until the FWF receives the signed and stamped cover sheet (see also section [2.2.3.](#)).

1.3. Who is eligible to apply?

Applications for grants in the START-Programme can only be submitted by individuals (natural persons). Institutions or companies may not apply.

- 1) The call is open to any researcher with a PhD or MD degree; the doctoral degree must have been completed (award of certificate) no less than two years and no longer than eight years before the deadline for submission of applications (20th September 2021). Proven time spent raising children will be considered as interruptions to scientific/scholarly

¹ The criterion third-part funding in programmes with similar aims and comparable funding will not be taken into account, if the comparable grant is close to the end or already finished.

activity and up to three years will be allowed per child cared for by the applicant. Proven time spent on compulsory military or civilian service, time required to obtain corresponding specific qualifications in the relevant field (e.g. for receiving clinical qualifications) and long-term illness, will also be taken into account.

- 2) Applicants must have the necessary scientific/scholarly qualification (postdoctoral experience), to perform the project. All applicants are expected to submit evidence of independent scientific/scholarly activity as well as an outstanding track record in the form of publications in international journals and/or internationally recognised contributions to the development of the field. In general, a period of at least one year's research abroad is also necessary and applicants should have already acquired competitive third-party funds independently² since earning their doctorate.
- 3) The project supported by the project money must be carried out in Austria or under the responsibility of an Austrian research institution. The Austrian research institution must confirm that the necessary infrastructure to perform the research will be available for the entire duration of the project.

Notwithstanding the undertaking that an application with an identical content will be submitted to the ERC (see section [1.7](#)), double funding is not permitted (see [FWF funding guidelines](#)).

Where additional funding applications are submitted to other FWF Programmes, those applications must differ substantially from the planned START project in terms of research questions and objectives. Applications which include work already proposed for a START project and are excessively similar to the START project will not be considered by the FWF Board. The sole exception to this rule is the Elise Richter Programme, where at the same time an application which is substantially similar in content may be submitted as long as the programme-specific guidelines are observed.

It should be noted that each applicant may submit only one application per call for proposals under the START programme.

For information on submitting an application from abroad, see the FWF website at [Applications from abroad](#).

1.4. What types of projects can be funded?

The project should be in the field of non-profit-oriented scientific/scholarly research and it must be planned for a duration of 72 months; the goals and methodology of the project should be precisely described. Non-profit oriented scientific/scholarly research is research whose value is primarily related to the importance for the further development of research (scientific/scholarly work directed at enhancing our understanding of the field).

² Research projects etc. for which the applicant is/was the main person responsible for the project in terms of both planning and execution.

Any aspects of a research project that go beyond basic research (results of relevance to society, to the environment or to the economy) may be mentioned, although they play no part in the assessment of whether the project should be funded.

An interim evaluation after three years gives grantees the chance to adapt their research to accommodate any changes in the field.

1.5. What requirements must be met to apply?

Researchers are eligible to apply if their publication record over the last five years has been internationally visible and if their current career stage is commensurate with the career progression expected in their field. The following criteria are decisive in assessing their publication record—documented in the “Publication list” (see section [2.4](#))—and in initiating the review process:

- **Quality assurance:** Most relevant in assessing the applicant’s publication record are those publications that have undergone a quality assurance procedure in line with international standards (peer review or an equivalent procedure; in the natural and life sciences, peer review is expected). Journals must usually be listed in Web of Science, Scopus, or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). In the case of journals that are not listed in these databases, or in the case of monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, or other publication types, the applicant must provide a link to the publisher’s website, describing the respective quality assurance procedure. If no description should be available, it is the applicant’s responsibility to provide evidence that the publication has been subject to an appropriate quality assurance procedure.
- **International visibility:** Most of the applicant’s publications must have a wider than national reach. In the natural sciences, life sciences, and social sciences, most of the publications listed must be in English.
- **Number/scope and quality** of the applicant’s publications must be commensurate with the expected career progression and the field concerned. At least two publications must have undergone a quality assurance procedure and must be internationally visible with a substantial and independent contribution on the part of the applicant. At least one first- or last-author publication is required in the life sciences.

Should an applicant fail to meet one or more of the above criteria, the applicant must include an explanation with the application. In cases of doubt, the decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide whether the research qualifications are adequate.

1.6. What types of funding can be requested?

Project-specific costs are eligible for funding. These include personnel and non-personnel costs that are necessary for carrying out the project and that go beyond the resources provided by the infrastructure of the research institution. The FWF does not finance the infrastructure or basic equipment of research institutions. The amount of funding requested must be between €800,000 and €1,200,000 for the entire funding period.

For information on requesting funding for the personnel costs of the principal investigator (= applicants who intend their salary to be paid from the grant), see [Information on funding the principal investigator's \(PI's\) salary](#).

The National Research Partner form should be completed for costs arising from the collaboration with [national research partners](#) that are not invoiced to the principal investigator, but have to be handled directly between the research institution of the national research partner and the FWF.

1.7. START and ERC Starting Grant

With the submission of a START application, the applicant commits him- or herself – provided that there is no formal reason why this may not be done – to submitting an application with the same content within the next possible call³ for ERC-Starting Grants. Further information about the ERC Funding Schemes may be found at <https://erc.europa.eu/funding/starting-grants>.

2. Application content and form

2.1. Sections of the application

A complete application must include the following parts:

1) Academic abstract in English comprising no more than **3,000 characters** (incl. spaces; no formulas or special characters). The academic abstract will be used to inform potential reviewers about the project. The abstract must be subdivided into the following sections using the given English terms:

- Wider research context / theoretical framework
- Hypotheses / research questions / objectives
- Approach / methods
- Level of originality / innovation
- Primary researchers involved

Where options are given (indicated by slashes), please choose an option that is appropriate for your project.

³ Applicants are requested to submit their ERC Starting Grant proposal with similar content at the next possible deadline ([January 2022](#)).

2) Project description:

A project description on no more than 22 consecutively numbered pages, incl. table of contents, list of abbreviations, headings, figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc. according to the formal requirements mentioned in Section [2.2](#).

The project description must also include the following annexes on additional pages:

- Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (*References*) on no more than 5 pages;
- Annex 2: Information on research institution(s) and justification of requested funding;
- Annex 3: Academic curriculum vitae (hereinafter referred to as CV) and description of previous research achievements of the applicant (no more than 3 pages per CV);
- Annex 4: Letter of recommendation;
- Annex 5 (optional): Confirmations (collaboration letters) of national and international cooperation partners (no more than 1 page per letter);

3) Attachments to be uploaded individually:

- Mandatory: complete publication list of the applicant, broken down into quality assured and non-quality assured (see also Section [2.4](#)).
- Where applicable: cover letter; list of reviewers to be excluded; report on results or final report for follow-up applications (see also Section [3](#)); for resubmissions: overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application and response(s) to reviews; etc.

4) Completed forms:

- Required forms: *Academic abstract*, *Application form*, *Programme specific data form*, *Cost breakdown form* and *Co-authors form*;
- Optional forms: *National research partners form*, *National / International cooperation arrangements form*.

2.2. Formal requirements and submission of application

2.2.1. Language of application

To allow applications to be reviewed by international experts, applications must be submitted in English.

2.2.2. Formatting

The continuous text in the project description, annexes 1-3, and the attachments (except for quotes) must be written in 11 pt. font with 1.5 line (15-20 pt.) spacing and at least 2 cm margins. Applicants must comply strictly with all upper limits (e.g., number of pages, attachments, etc.).

Citations in the text and the list of works cited (*References*) in the application must be in line with the conventions of the respective discipline, preferably according to a widely-used style guide (e.g., *Chicago Manual of Style*, *APA Publication Manual*). Applicants are free to choose the citation conventions or style guide they prefer, but they must apply them/it consistently throughout the application. If available, a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) should be used for the literature cited.

2.2.3. Submitting the application

The application must be submitted online at [elane](#).

To submit the application online, applicants are required to register at the address shown above. All the necessary forms must then be filled out online; additional documents such as the project description can be uploaded. For additional information, see the “Quick reference” guide at [elane](#).

1) Required parts of the application:

a) Files:

- **Proposal.pdf** (project description incl. annexes 1-4 and where applicable 5, with PDF bookmarks, at least for the major sections)
- **Publication_list.pdf** (publication list of the applicant for the last 5 years, broken down into quality assured and non-quality assured)

b) Forms:

- *Academic abstract* in **English**
- *Application form*
- *Programme specific data*
- *Cost breakdown*
- *Co-authors* (mandatory information)
- *National research partners* (optional)
- *National and international cooperation arrangements* (optional)

2) Optional file uploads:

- *Cover_Letter.pdf* (= accompanying letter)
- *Negative_list.pdf* (= list of reviewers who should be excluded)
- *Overview_Revision.pdf* (=in the case of resubmission, overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application)
- *Revision.pdf* (=in the case of resubmission, an overall response to all the reviewers or, if preferred, a short response to *each* reviewer saved in a *separate* file: *Revision_A.pdf*, *Revision_B.pdf* etc.)
- *Quotes_other_costs.pdf*

Once the application has been submitted (deadline 20th September 2021, 13.59 CEST), a [PDF cover sheet](#) will be generated automatically. This cover sheet must be signed by hand and stamped by the responsible representative of the applicant's research institution before

being sent to the FWF by conventional mail (date of postmark 20th September 2021). The application shall not be considered officially submitted until the FWF receives the signed and stamped cover sheet. Alternatively, the signed and stamped cover sheet can be scanned in, signed using the applicant's qualified electronic signature⁴ (e.g., mobile phone signature), and sent to the FWF (office@fwf.ac.at) by e-mail. Please note that a scanned, signed and stamped cover sheet is invalid if it does not have a qualified electronic signature.

2.3. Project description and annexes

The project description must comprise no more than 22 pages and include a table of contents as well as the contents described in section [2.3.1](#). Annexes must be attached to the project description in the order indicated starting with section [2.3.2](#) to section 2.3.6.

2.3.1. Scientific/scholarly aspects

- (1) State of the art of relevant international research (including own preliminary work, if applicable) and relation of the project to this context
- (2) Clearly defined aims and hypotheses or research question(s) of the project
- (3) Description of the project's anticipated level of originality or innovation⁵
- (4) Methods
- (5) Intended [cooperation arrangements](#) (national and/or international) as part of the planned project should be explained. This explanation should specify the people with whom the applicant aims to collaborate, what the subject of the intended cooperation arrangement(s) will be and what they will contribute to the project. All of the national and/or international cooperation arrangements that were stated to be essential in the project description should be listed on the *cooperation arrangements* form and may be evidenced by a collaboration letter.
- (6) Work plan and timeline
- (7) Research-related qualifications of the researchers involved and importance of the project for the career development of the applicant
- (8) All potential ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects⁶ of the submitted project and how the applicant plans to deal with them must be described in a separate section.

⁴ For example: <https://www.buergerkarte.at/en/pdf-signature-mobile.html>

⁵ Examples of projects worthy of funding include, among others:

- Research on new ideas and/or examination of new research questions,
- Application or development of new research methods, new technologies, or original approaches to solving research questions,
- Application or modification of existing methods, technologies, or approaches to new research questions.

Please note that the next logical step or the incremental further development of published data is not considered to be innovative or original.

⁶ For instance, the European Commission's [Ethics for Researchers](#) or [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) can serve as a guide here.

These questions should be addressed briefly in the text even if the applicant believes the project does not raise any ethical issues.

- (9) A separate section must describe what sex-specific and gender-related issues⁷ the planned project may potentially give rise to, and how the applicant intends to deal with them. These must be addressed briefly in the text even if the applicant believes the project does not raise any sex-specific and gender-related issues.

2.3.2. Annex 1: List of references

- List of literature cited in the application on no more than 5 pages

2.3.3. Annex 2: Financial aspects

The template for the description of projected costs can be found in [Appendix I](#).

- Information on the research institution and those of the national research partners
 - Available personnel (not financed by the FWF; usually, the principal investigator and the personnel of the research institutions)
 - Available infrastructure
- Information on the funding requested
 - Concise justifications for the personnel requested (type(s) of requested position(s), job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project);
 - Concise justifications for non-personnel cost (equipment, materials, travel, and other costs).

2.3.4. Annex 3: Academic CV and description of previous research achievements

The academic CV and research achievements for the principal investigator must be described on no more than three pages.

2.3.4.1. Required contents for the academic CV

- Name and contact details of the person, address of the research institution, and relevant websites. It is also required to provide a publicly available link to a list of all published publications; the use of ORCID is expressly recommended for this purpose.
- List of academic milestones and relevant positions held to date (with a brief explanation of any career gaps, if applicable).
- Main areas of research and short statement of the most important research results achieved to date.

⁷ Positioning and reflecting on the research approaches planned for the project in terms of sex-specific and gender-related issues, for instance: Is the research approach likely to produce sex-specific and gender-related findings? If so, what findings? How and where are these integrated into the research approach? (For information on checking the relevance of sex-specific and gender-related issues to a project, see FWF website [Gender Issues](#).)

2.3.4.2. Required description of previous research achievements

- Academic publications: list of no more than ten of the most important published or accepted academic publications (journal articles, monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, preprints, proceedings, etc.), for each publication, either a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) must be indicated. In accordance with the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), journal-based metrics like the journal impact factor should not be included.
- Additional research achievements: list of no more than ten of the most important scientific/scholarly research achievements apart from academic publications, such as awards, conference papers, keynote speeches, important research projects, research data, software, codes, exhibitions, knowledge transfers, science communication, licenses, or patents.

2.3.5. Annex 4: Letter of recommendation

- A letter of recommendation from the head or the group leader of the research institute, where the project will be hosted. The person writing the letter may send it directly to the FWF Office.

2.3.6. Annex 5 (optional): Collaboration letters

- Confirmations (each no more than 1 page) of national and international cooperation partners that are stated to be essential in the project description.

2.4. Mandatory appendix: Publication list

A list of all research publications⁸ (broken down into “quality assured publications” and “other publications”, see section [1.5](#)) of the applicant (*publication_list.pdf*). This list – which will not be forwarded to the reviewers – is used to assess applicants’ eligibility and helps the FWF to speed up the process of finding reviewers who do not have a conflict of interest.

2.5. Eligible project-specific costs

The only projected costs eligible for funding are those in the following cost categories.

2.5.1. Personnel costs

The application should include all persons, in addition to the staff already available, who will be required for the proposed project and who will work exclusively on the proposed project.

The available legal categories of employment are contracts of employment for full- or part-time employees (DV) and reimbursement for work on an hourly basis (GB). In addition, a part-time contract of employment (DV 50%, “studentische MitarbeiterInnen”) may be

⁸ Publication lists must include: all authors, complete titles, journal, year, and page numbers. For each publication, if available, either a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) should be indicated; for publications with more than 20 authors, an “et al.” reference can be used.

requested for people who have not yet completed a master's or diploma programme in the relevant subject. Please note that the maximum amount of employment that can be requested for doctoral candidates is 75% (equivalent to 30 hours per week).

The current FWF salary scheme ("[personnel costs and salary scale](#)" or for graduates of medicine in Austria "[Personnel costs / Salaries for Graduates of Medical Studies in Austria](#)") indicates the salaries that may be requested.

The FWF grants an annual increase to compensate for inflation; this is applied automatically to all contracts of employment in START projects that are valid when the increase is effected.

2.5.2. Grant-salaried principal investigators:

The FWF defines a grant-salaried principal investigator as a principal investigator whose salary is to be paid from the funding provided for the project. Female applicants are also eligible to apply for funding for professional development.

A detailed description of the requirements and application procedure can be found in the [Information on funding the principal investigator's \(PI's\) salary](#).

2.5.3. Equipment costs

Equipment may only be requested if it is specifically required for the project.

In this context, "equipment" includes scientific instruments, system components, self-constructed devices (generally assembled from smaller pieces of equipment and materials), and other tangible fixed assets as well as intangible assets such as licenses, industrial property rights, and licenses derived from such rights, whose acquisition cost per item exceeds the amount of EUR 1,500.00 (incl. VAT, unless the research institution is entitled to deduct VAT) and where the said equipment is financed primarily (more than 50% of the total costs of the specific item) from FWF funds.

For items of equipment which are required specifically for the project and whose acquisition cost (including VAT) is €24,000.00 or higher, applicants must confirm with their signatures on the application form (*Affirmation of applicant*) that they have verified that no comparable equipment that could be used or shared is available within a reasonable distance, and that the possibility of (co-)financing by third parties has been explored. Applicants must also ensure that they are aware of any possible costs that could arise from the use, maintenance, and repairs of the equipment.

The principal investigator is to instruct his/her research institution to order the equipment and effect payment accordingly. In all equipment purchases, the research institution's procurement guidelines are to be observed. Each item of equipment is to be recorded in the institution's inventory and the acquisition costs are to be reimbursed from the respective project budget in accordance with the relevant agreement between the research institution and the FWF.

2.5.4. Material costs

“Materials” encompasses consumables and small pieces of equipment (cost per item is below €1,500.00 incl. VAT).

The calculation of requested funds for project-specific material costs should be justified with reference to the timelines, work plans, and experiment plans. In making the calculation, experience from previous projects should be considered.

2.5.5. Travel costs

Funding may be requested for project-specific travel and accommodation, field work, expeditions, etc. The project description must include a detailed travel plan broken down by project participant. This plan must indicate which persons, for what purpose, when (in which year of the project), for how long and where they will be travelling, and how much this will cost.

Travel expenses for researchers from other Austrian and foreign research institutions can only be granted in exceptional cases and require detailed justification.

The calculation of travel and accommodation costs should generally be based on the federal regulations governing travel costs (RGV). The current RGV rates for travel abroad can be found in the following [document](#).

For longer stays, a transparent and appropriate budget should be prepared; in general, this budget will be lower than the costs calculated based on RGV rates.

2.5.6. Costs as part of national and international cooperation arrangements

In contrast to national research partners (see section [1.6](#)), costs arising within the context of a research collaboration with an external research institution are to be borne by that research institution.

Within the context of cooperation arrangements, funds may only be transferred to a cooperation partner (whether or not they are based abroad) if they are clearly limited contracts or services and directly necessary for carrying out the Austrian project. These costs must be substantiated by a vendor quote, and funding for them can be requested under “Other costs”. This does not apply to [cooperation arrangements with scientists or scholars from developing countries](#).

2.5.7. Other eligible costs

- Independent contracts for work and services (costs for work of clearly defined scope and content carried out by individuals, provided that they are justified in terms of research and economical)
- Costs for the preparation, archiving, open access, and reuse of research data in repositories in accordance with the [Open Access Policy](#) of the FWF

- Costs that cannot be included under personnel, equipment, materials, or travel costs, for example:
 - Coverage of costs for the use of research facilities, e.g., costs for the project-specific use of available equipment (project-specific “equipment time”) or large research facilities; in any case, vendor quotes should be provided. Where the costs exceed €10,000.00 not including VAT (over the entire term of the project), each vendor quote must be accompanied by the corresponding calculation basis. This calculation must include information on the nature and scope of the services for which project-specific costs are incurred (according to internal charging procedures, e.g., based on usage days or hours, or based on the number and type of measurements/analyses performed, etc.) and may not contain any infrastructure-related costs like equipment depreciation, supplementary charges for overhead, costs of research premises, etc.
 - Costs for any laboratory animals necessary for the project
 - Costs for project-specific work carried out outside the applicant’s research institution (e.g., for analysis work performed elsewhere, interviews, sample collection, preparation of thin slices, etc.); vendor quotes should be uploaded
 - Costs for the disposal of project-specific hazardous waste

2.6. Forms

All required forms must be completed in their entirety. In order for the application to be legally binding, the FWF requires the PDF cover sheet with original signatures and an original stamp or seal. The blank cover sheet can be generated once the application has been completed (*elane* cover sheet).

- Affirmation of applicant,
- Affirmation of applicant’s research institution,
- Declaration of the applicant on the GDPR,
- if applicable, a copy of the Affirmation of national research partner(s),
- if applicable, the Affirmation of the national research partner’s research institution.
- In addition the commitment to submit an identical ERC-Starting Grant within the next possible call must also be signed by the applicant (part of the automatically generated cover sheet).

Form *co-authors*: All persons who have made substantial scientific/scholarly contributions to the application, either at its conception or during its writing, should be named. A brief description of the nature of each contribution should be included; where there are no co-authors, applicants should state this explicitly on the form.

2.7. Additional attachments

In addition to the project description and the forms, the following attachments should be uploaded, where applicable:

- Cover letter;
- List of reviewers who should be excluded;
- Attachments when revising a rejected application (resubmission); see Section 2.8.;
- Vendor quotes for any relevant items requested under “Other costs” (e.g., use of research facilities),
- Evidence of periods of child care, compulsory military or civilian service, or time spent obtaining qualifications/training relevant to the field of research or for long-term illness should be submitted if the maximum permitted time since conferment of the doctoral degree is exceeded.

It should be noted that any annexes or attachments in addition to the ones mentioned above shall not be considered in further stages of the process (such as publications not yet published).

2.8. Revising a rejected application (“resubmission”)

A resubmission is defined as the revision of an application which has already been rejected with the same or similar research questions, regardless of the programme category. Where an applicant submits an application on the same or very similar research questions yet does not consider it to be a resubmission but an entirely new project, the applicant must submit a separate accompanying letter to the FWF Office explaining how the research questions have changed. For example, changes in research methods alone are not sufficient for a proposal to qualify as a completely new project. In cases of doubt, the decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide.

If the project submitted is a resubmission of a rejected application,

- an accompanying letter containing an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application must be submitted to the FWF. This overview will not be passed on to the reviewers.
- response(s) to reviews: the applicant can decide whether the response(s) should be passed on to the relevant previous reviewer or all reviewers (see section [3](#)). These response(s) should address the suggestions and criticism expressed in each review of the previous application and point out the changes made on that basis. Such responses are not necessary in the case of reviews written by persons who are to be excluded from the review process for the resubmitted application. However, such exclusions must be justified and will also be counted toward the list of reviewers who should be excluded for the resubmission.

If all the reviewers are to receive the response(s), the applicant must submit a single document containing an overall response. If the response(s) are to be passed on only to the reviewers who were previously involved, the applicant should include a short response to each review in a separate document.

Resubmissions must show changes. In the case of resubmissions of applications that have been rejected for the standardised reasons C3, C4, and C5, the changes need to be substantial (based on the comments in the reviews). If such changes are not made, the application will be returned without review by the decision-making bodies of the FWF.

3. Processing and decision on the application

The FWF Office undertakes a formal check of all applications submitted within the deadline. Please note that no alterations may be made to the application after the submission deadline. The date of the postmark of the consignment (= final PDF cover sheet with original signatures and stamp of the research institution) serves as proof of timely submission.

All applications that meet the relevant research and formal criteria will be sent to reviewers (generally working outside Austria) nominated by the FWF Board and confirmed by the decision-making bodies of the FWF. For a positive decision at least three reviews are needed.

Once the review process has begun, no more changes can be made to the application.

Decisions on the award of START grants are taken by the Board of the FWF based on recommendations of the International Jury. The recommendation of the Jury is based on the results of the international peer review and an interview, which will take place on the first day of the annual meeting of the International Jury. The meeting of the Jury usually lasts two days. The International Jury prepares a short-list of promising START candidates before the meeting (generally three to four weeks in advance). These candidates are invited to an interview during the Jury meeting. At the same time, applicants who are not on the shortlist are informed of the decision and receive the reviews of their applications, in anonymous form. The International Jury reaches its list of recommendations in a closed session, i.e. in the absence of the FWF Board.

Applicants are informed of the decisions in writing.

Requests for changes and returning applications without review

The FWF will not process incomplete applications, those which do not comply with the FWF's regulations or which contain formal errors (in particular, if the maximum length permitted is exceeded), unless and until the applicant has rectified the problems within a given period of time (10 working days). If the problems have not been resolved within this period of time, the FWF's decision-making bodies will return these proposals without review. Similarly, applications will not be reviewed if they have been previously rejected by the FWF and resubmitted without appropriate revisions.

The most common reasons why applications are returned without review by the decision-making bodies of the FWF are (a) that the applicant's track record of publications does not

meet the requirements (see section [1.5](#)) and (b) that the application is missing specific hypotheses or research questions (see section [2.3](#)).

Reasons for rejection

The reasons for rejecting a project will be analysed and assigned one of five categories (C1–C5). The result will be sent to applicants along with the reviews. A detailed description of the categories can be found in the [General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure](#).

Resubmissions

If the application is a resubmission of a previously rejected proposal, the FWF will generally contact those reviewers who provided *constructive* criticism on the previous application. Reviewers who gave entirely positive or negative comments will generally not be contacted for a second review. However, please note that all resubmissions are also evaluated by new reviewers.

Proposal bans

Applications that are rejected for reason "C5" will be barred from resubmission for at least 12 months from the date of the decision and cannot be resubmitted during that period.

Applications that have been submitted three times and rejected for reasons C3 or C4 (i.e., the original application and the respective resubmissions) are also barred for 12 months (from the date of decision); rejections for reasons C1 or C2 do not count towards this total.

It is only ever topics that are temporarily banned according to these rules, and not applicants.

Exclusion of reviewers

As mentioned in section [2.7](#), an additional document may be uploaded giving a list of up to three reviewers who the applicant believes may have a conflict of interest and whom the applicant therefore does not wish to review the application. A detailed description of the FWF's policy on conflicts of interest can be found in the [General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure](#) document.

The applicant must give reasons for why they wish to exclude certain reviewers. If the reasons given hold up to scrutiny, the FWF will generally fulfil such requests and will exclude those reviewers from the review process.

Please note that the FWF does not wish to receive, nor will it consider a list of possible reviewers from applicants.

4. Compliance with legal requirements and standards of research integrity

Applicants must comply with all legal requirements and safety provisions (e.g. the Federal Disabilities Act) that apply to their START project and obtain all the necessary permits (e.g., from the Ethics Commission, the Commission for Animal Experimentation, the Federal Monuments Authority Austria, or the relevant foreign authorities).

Applicants must also comply with the [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice](#) of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (ÖAWI) when submitting the application and carrying out the project. If there is reason to believe that an applicant has failed to comply with these standards, the FWF will arrange for the ombudsperson of the respective research institution or the [Austrian Agency for Research Integrity](#) (ÖAWI) to carry out an investigation. The FWF reserves the right to suspend, in part or in whole, any procedures related to applications or ongoing projects until the investigation has been concluded. For more detailed information, see [FWF procedure in cases of suspected scientific misconduct](#).

5. Publication of project data and results

The FWF would like to point out that should the project be approved, the FWF will publish on its website a summary of the project in German and English for public relations (PR) purposes – which must be sent to the FWF by the applicant when returning the grant agreement – as well as the amount of funding granted and, on project completion, summaries of the final report of the project. The principal investigator should ensure that these summaries are written in such a way as to safeguard legitimate interests of secrecy for reasons of national defence and patent law, and that trade secrets are appropriately protected. Guidelines for writing PR summaries can be found [here](#).

In addition, the FWF requires a data management plan (DMP) for all approved projects. This should also be sent to the FWF when returning the grant agreement. Information on and the template for the DMP can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

For any kind of publication of project results (e.g., academic publications, research data, conference papers, and media reports), applicants must comply with the guidelines specified in the funding agreement on acknowledging the FWF as the funding institution and the [Open Access Policy](#).

APPENDIX I:

Template: information on the research institution and description of financial aspects

Note: The information on the research institution and the description of financial aspects shall be presented using the following structure and appended as Annex 1 to the project description. The list and justification of the costs requested must be in accordance with the costs indicated in the form *cost breakdown*.

a) Details on the research institution of the applicant and of national research partners:

- Existing personnel (not financed by the FWF, usually the principle investigator and research personnel at the research site(s))
- Existing infrastructure

b) Information on the funding requested:

- Concise justifications for the personnel requested (type(s) of requested position(s), job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project);
- Concise justifications for non-personnel cost (equipment, materials, travel, and other costs).

Listings and justifications for

Personnel costs:

Equipment costs:

Material costs:

Travel expenses:

Other cost (including independent contracts for work and services):

APPENDIX II: Guidelines for Reviewers START Programme⁹

The FWF actively supports equal opportunities and fair treatment for all applicants. The FWF does not put applicants at a disadvantage for non-research-related reasons (such as age, gender, etc.) and therefore asks all reviewers to apply the same standards. For example, when assessing applicants' qualifications, please disregard their actual age, but consider their academic age instead. Our commitment to equal opportunities also means taking into account breaks or delays in applicants' research careers (e.g., due to parental leave; long-term or chronic illness; disability; caring responsibilities; etc.), which may have led to publication gaps, unorthodox career paths, or limited international research experience.

Only the ten most important academic publications and the ten most important additional research achievements of the applicant are to be considered when evaluating the application. As a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA](#)), the FWF also emphasizes that, in assessing research performance, reviewers should refrain from using journal-based metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor.

Please review the present proposal¹⁰, using the following six assessment criteria:

1) qualification of the applicant, 2) innovation and originality, 3) quality of the proposed research, 4) approach and feasibility, 5) ethics and gender, and 6) overall evaluation. For each of these criteria except 5) we ask you for both written comments and a rating on a scale from "excellent" to "poor". Please be aware, however, that the FWF's funding decision will be based primarily on referees' written assessments rather than the ratings assigned.

Please keep in mind that sections 1 and 2 will be forwarded to the applicant in its entirety and in anonymous form.

⁹ Information about the FWF's 'Corporate Policy' and a copy of the 'Guidelines for START Applications' may be found on the FWF's website (<http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/corporate-policy/> or (<https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/start-programme/>).

¹⁰ The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements. Please bear these in mind when writing your review. (Key formal requirements: 22 pages max. for the project description including figures and tables; 5 pages max. for the list of references; 3 pages max. for the academic CV, including a description of previous research achievements and the ten most important publications. For further details see <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/application/start-programme>)

Section 1

1. Qualifications of the researchers involved

How well is the applicant qualified to carry out the proposed research? How would you assess the academic qualifications of the applicant and his/her potential to independently build up or consolidate his/her own research group? In evaluating their qualifications, please consider their career stage, taking into account unusual career paths and circumstances that may have slowed down their progress (e.g., parental leave, long-term or chronic illness, disability, caring responsibilities).

2. Innovation and originality

Is the proposed research innovative? Does it make an original contribution to its field?

3. Quality of the proposed research

Are the research questions formulated clearly? Are they timely, challenging and likely to lead to relevant insights?

4. Approach and feasibility

Is the research design well conceived, clearly formulated, and suitable for answering the research question(s)? Is there a well-organized work plan? Have the methods been chosen well and does the proposal describe them in sufficient detail?

5. Ethics and gender

Ethics: Have ethical considerations been addressed satisfactorily?

Gender: Applicants are required to address any relevant sex-specific and/or gender-related elements inherent in their research questions and/or research design. Please assess whether their treatment of these components is adequate.

6. Overall evaluation

What is your overall impression of the proposal? Specifically, what would you consider its key strengths and weaknesses? Please give reasons for your answers, taking as much space as you need.

Section 2: Optional recommendations for the applicant

If you are in favour of the project being funded, you may want to add to the formal assessment in Section 1 by making further and perhaps more informal comments or suggestions here. However, please note that these remarks, too, may impact on the FWF's funding decision, especially if they amount to substantive criticism of the project.

Section 3: Confidential remarks to the FWF)

Please use this space to make any comments that you do not wish to be conveyed to the applicant(s). Feel free to also give us feedback about the evaluation process and your interactions with us.