



Guide for evaluators

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to describe and detail the selection process for applications to the CaixaImpulse programme. The principles that govern the evaluation and selection process are as follows:

- **EXCELLENCE.** The ultimate goal of the selection process is to ensure that the projects selected are not only the best from among those presented (in accordance with the programme's principles and selection criteria), but also that they have a level of excellence within their area and sector. As such, it is possible that if the applications do not meet the required standards of excellence, places will remain vacant in the programme. The quality of the proposals will be assessed based on evaluations made by specially chosen experts, who will evaluate the proposals using rubrics that prevent the application of personal criteria and protect them from possible conflicts of interest.
- **IMPARTIALITY.** All presented proposals will be evaluated following the same processes, based on the same criteria and for their own merits, regardless of any other factor. Evaluation procedures will guarantee that the evaluators access the information necessary for the impartial evaluation of the applications and identify potential conflicts of interest.

Evaluators involved in the process must give formal notice of any existing conflict of interest with regards to the proposals under evaluation or to the programme in general. Evaluators may not evaluate any application in which they have any type of conflict of interest.

- **TRANSPARENCY.** Candidates, evaluators and the general public have access to the basic principles that govern the processes of evaluating and selecting candidates and to the procedures followed for these purposes. In addition, candidates will receive information regarding the status of their application at each stage of the process.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY.** All proposals, data and related documents will be handled with confidentiality by the agents involved in the selection process.

A single-blind system will be used in the evaluation process. Under this system, evaluators will be informed of who the applicant is (in order to identify possible conflicts of interest), but not of who the other evaluators are. The applicant will not be informed of who is evaluating their proposal.

- **QUALITY.** The processes, procedures and selection criteria will be documented and communicated to all interested parties.

The evaluation and selection of applications will be carried out according to the recommendations of the *European Science Foundation*, as published in the *Peer Review Guide*.

The software used for the presentation and evaluation of applications will ensure confidentiality. Access will be restricted through usernames and passwords.

Evaluators will sign an agreement that will include, in addition to any aspects related to the selection process and criteria, the obligation to state any existing conflict of interest and to ensure appropriate confidentiality of the information provided when carrying out their task.

An internal audit of the process will be performed every year to verify that the established procedures are being applied and are effective, identifying therein any possibilities for improvement.

Part 1: Eligibility check

For each application presented within the established time frame, the Secretariat of the CaixaImpulse programme shall verify its compliance with the requirements for participation specified in the terms and conditions.

More specifically, this office guarantees that the applications sent to the evaluators are eligible with regards to ensuring that:

- The applicant is a research centre registered in Spain.
- The applicant is the owner of the protected or protectable asset resulting from the research to be valorized.
- The mandatory documentation for the project has been presented.

Applications that fail to comply with any of the rules for participation will be excluded from the process. Applicants will be informed of said exclusion and the reasons for it.

Therefore, evaluators must formally consider all applications assigned to them for evaluation and rating as being eligible.

Part 2: Initial Evaluation

Applications that meet the requirements of the call, and which therefore pass the eligibility stage, proceed to the initial evaluation stage.

Applications are distributed in groups according to subject area, with approximately 30 candidates per group. Applicants select the subject area that best fits their project on the application form. The list of areas is as follows:

Disciplinary fields

Business area
Life Sciences
Therapeutic
Diagnostics
Medical Devices

Scientific area
Life Sciences
Biomathematics
Cell Biology
Human Biology
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Human Physiology
Genetics
Immunology
Microbiology
Neurosciences
Medical and Health Sciences
Clinical Sciences
Epidemiology
Forensic Medicine
Occupational Medicine
Internal Medicine
Nutritional Sciences
Pathology
Pharmacodynamics
Pharmacology
Preventive medicine
Psychiatry
Public Health
Surgery
Toxicology

This self-classification will be respected as far as possible. However, the organisation can reclassify an application into a different disciplinary field if the coherence and size of the groups requires so.

Similarly, when the number of applications in a disciplinary field is very low, the organisation may combine different disciplinary fields, provided that the resulting group is consistent and that there is affinity among the subject areas.

Registry of evaluators

The CaixaImpulse Programme's Secretariat will hold a registry of experts. These experts have expressed their willingness to be part of the team of evaluators and their suitability for the evaluation of specific disciplinary fields.

Programme organisers will rotate experts in and out who form the team of evaluators. In general, no expert may participate in more than three calls over the course of six years. The organisation will also ensure that at least one-third of the pool of evaluators that took part in the previous selection process is renewed each year.

Evaluators who participate in the selection process must sign an agreement whereby they agree to maintain the confidentiality of applications evaluated. Furthermore, these experts agree not to use the information to which they have access for any purpose other than the examination and evaluation of applications.

Assigning evaluators to groups

Two evaluators will be assigned to each group. They will be chosen based on their area of expertise, knowledge and experience, also taking into account criteria of balance, independence and objectivity.

In order for the experts to evaluate the applications, free of any pressure and with maximum independence, the assignment of evaluators will not be made public. However, once the selection process has concluded and the programme participants have been selected, the complete list of experts who have intervened in the selection process (along with their names and companies) will be published on the programme's website, without specifying in which part of the process they took part in or the disciplinary fields they evaluated.

Evaluation of an application

Each application will be evaluated by two experts, who will independently examine and rate the application without any type of contact or discussion between themselves.

The evaluation process will be carried out on an online platform expressly designed for this purpose. Each expert will have access only to the information and documentation of the applications assigned to him or her.

The evaluation of the applications will be done based on an evaluation table that lists the criteria to be rated, their weight, as well as the associated description of the different obtainable scores for each criteria (from 0 to 10).

For each application, experts will have to justify the reasons for his/her evaluation and the overall impression of the application in a brief and concise text.

Using the scores given by the experts and the respective weighting, a final score will be obtained, which will be the expert's evaluation of the application.

The final score for an application is the average of the scores from the two evaluators.

Recommendations for the evaluator

- Before beginning to evaluate an application, it is advisable to be familiar with the criteria and definitions in the **Evaluation Table** and the overall functioning of the process.
- Before starting to rate the application, evaluators should examine a number of applications (around four to six) so that they have an idea of the information submitted and of the correspondence between the information contained in each application and the factors defined in its evaluation.
- Before concluding the evaluation, the first applications evaluated should be reviewed to ensure that there is no bias in the scores.

Part 3. Short-lists

Once the initial evaluation period has concluded, the organising entity will verify that all of the applications have been rated by the assigned evaluators and that they have finished the evaluation task.

Review

The Selection Committee, which is the body responsible for ensuring the correct functioning of the selection process, will review the consistency of the evaluations between the experts who evaluated the same applications, taking into account the average score from each expert with regards to the total number of applications evaluated.

If there is a significant difference between the experts' scores, a second review stage will commence. In this stage, those applications that have a significant difference in scores will be sent back to the evaluators. They will be told of the aforementioned difference and asked to review the scores if they consider it necessary.

In case that the difference between the experts' scores persists, a third evaluator will be assigned to the application. The final score for the application is the average of the scores from the two evaluators with less discrepancy.

Short-lists

The Selection Committee is responsible for short-listing the applications that will present to the Expert Panel and will also settle any issues that may arise during the process. When

making short lists of applications, those with the best scores in the overall ranking, the best scores in each disciplinary field and the best scores in each group will be identified. Up to 30 applications will be short-listed.

However, based on principles of excellence, if the quality of the applications justifies it, the Selection Committee can select a greater or lesser number of applications.

The short list of applications will be included in the Selection Committee Minutes.

Applicants will be notified as to whether or not their applications have been short-listed.

Part 4. Expert Panel

Applications that have been short-listed will then proceed to the final stage of the process, consisting of a personal interview in which the applicant can defend his or her project before the Panel, consisting of a committee of experts.

The experts that form part of this panel will have access to the information regarding the applications.

The general aim of the interviews is to assess more precisely the consistency and soundness of the projects proposed by the short-listed candidates and the suitability of the application with regards to the objectives of the programme.

An interview will typically last no more than 15 minutes and will follow the structure described below:

- A representative of the programme welcomes the candidate.
- The candidate will give a brief summary of the project (no longer than five minutes).
- The committee members will ask whatever questions they deem appropriate to assess the holistic quality of the project and of the candidate.

The programme representative will ensure that the interviews are held in accordance with the planned schedule, and candidates must be as punctual as requested.

There are no specific guidelines as to how the interview should be performed. It is the prerogative of the members of the panel to establish the dynamics, tone, depth and scope of questions posed to each candidate.

In general, questions should be short and the candidate should be the one who speaks most of the time.

Not all members of the panel need to ask the candidate questions. In fact, turns for questioning should be distributed evenly throughout the whole interview stage.

Preparing the interview

Experts will receive information about the candidates they must interview sufficiently in advance so as to be able to prepare the interviews correctly.

The experts must carefully examine the information in each application and prepare a list of possible questions to be put to the candidates.

Recommendations for the evaluator

- Ideally, the interviews should be scored as the interviews are held, although once a certain number (around five) have concluded, the initial scores should be reviewed and adjusted, taking into consideration the development of the evaluation.
- Similarly, notes should be taken during each interview, as they may be necessary at a later date to recall the presentation by the candidate during commission discussion.
- Whether or not they are deemed necessary in certain cases, conventional questions or questions that candidates may typically expect in the interview should be avoided. On the contrary, questions should be posed that could provide insight into aspects to be evaluated in this stage of the process (presentation quality, viability of the proposal and suitability to the reality of the estimated impact, effect of participation in the programme and on the trajectory of the project, etc.).
- All candidates should be treated the same regardless of the disciplinary field of the project, even if the evaluator may be more familiar with it. The depth and scope of the questions posed should be similar for all interviewees.
- Questions which can be answered from the information provided by the candidate in the application should not be asked.
- However, questions should be posed that result in more in-depth information about the application being obtained or clarification of aspects that, in the evaluator's opinion, are not sufficiently explained in the documentation.
- Ideally the interview should be held in English.

Evaluation of the final candidates

Experts involved in the evaluation of the interviews must give the applications an overall score, taking into account the following four aspects (1 being lowest and 4 being highest for each):

- The asset's **potential for transfer to market**, particularly as a new business (30%)
- The **social impact** of the project, broadly understood to be the ability of the project to contribute to improving the quality of life of people and society in general, all while respecting human rights and ethical principles (14%)
- The **capability and motivation of the participant** to lead the definition and implementation of the valorization and commercialization plan (26%)
- The **significance and the impact that participation in the programme will have on the project**, and its full implications for the valorization and transfer of the asset (30%)

Based on these considerations, and the available places, each application receives one of these scores:

Grade	Score
Exceptional	4
Good	3
Average	2
Poor	1

Evaluation protocol

At the end of each interview, the experts must give a score for each candidate according to the points described above. Panel members must not try to agree on or discuss their given scores as the interviews progress. Each member must individually assign his or her evaluation of the candidate examined according to his/her own impressions of the interview.

At the end of each session of interviews, panel members must notify the programme representative of their scores for each candidate interviewed. Once all of the candidates have been interviewed and all of the scores collected, the programme representative will draw up a provisional classification.

Taking this classification into consideration, the experts may discuss the appropriateness, reviewing notes and assessing the arguments that other experts may provide with the aim of revising one or several of the scores.

The above notwithstanding, it is at the committee's entire discretion to establish its own dynamics and determine the procedure it considers most suitable to reach an agreement as to the final list of participants.

Aspects to be considered

- The final list of candidates must be obtained without considering any other aspect that has not been explicitly established for the evaluation of an application.
- In this regard, accidental factors must not be taken into account to determine the final list of candidates. In particular, the following should be avoided:
 - Consideration of geographical origin, centre of origin or any other aspect that may not be linked to an evaluation performed exclusively according to criteria of excellence.
 - Any type of corporate bias, either to favour or to penalise candidates, which in some way can be associated to members of the panel, due to their disciplinary field, specific subject of the project, etc.

Code of Conduct

- There is no expressly established protocol for carrying out the interviews or formulating questions. It goes without saying that questions will be posed politely and respectfully and that the process will be carried out within the limits that are considered reasonable and correct.
- However, it must be taken into account that candidates will naturally be nervous and sensitive when attending the selection interview.
- For this reason evaluators are advised, at least during the initial moments, to establish an atmosphere of cordiality to help the candidate relax.
- Either way, this does not imply that difficult questions should be avoided or that candidates not be taken out of their comfort zone, provided this is considered necessary for a more effective evaluation.
- The time reserved for the interview must be used completely.
- Comments regarding previous interviews must not be made when the new candidate is entering the interview room, nor any type of information provided regarding previous interviews or candidates.
- Likewise, notes taken during other interviews or documents with their scores should not be left in the candidate's view.
- Under no circumstances should panel members inform candidates of their opinions regarding the projects defended, nor tell them their score or the result of their application.