

ITM / DGDC 3th Framework programme

Postdoctoral re-entry grants in FA3

Introduction

PhD training has been an increasingly important component of the DGDC/ITM Framework Agreement programmes (FA1 and especially FA2), mostly in the context of structural institutional capacity strengthening but also as an opening for individual graduates from the Master Programmes.

The continuity of an academic or scientific career after PhD training is a challenge in universities and institutes all around the world. The number of PhD's has increased enormously over the past decades, whereas postdoctoral positions remain scarce and relatively unstructured. This problem is especially acute in developing countries, due to the lack of resources and the slower adaptation to academic evolutions. In most cases, post-doctoral positions are foreseen only for lecturers and professors, directly and exclusively linked to teaching duties. Intermediate positions for younger post-doctoral scientists scarcely exist in the organogrammes and usually have to be funded by external, temporary and earmarked funding. This situations hinders or frustrates the perspectives of young, talented scientists to capitalise on their PhD training and research, to develop their own scientific programmes and to mature for more senior and stable positions. Brain drain to industrialised countries, ever more hungry for scientific talent, is all too often the obvious consequence, leading to an even greater and perverse unbalance between North and South.

Under the FA3 (starting 1.1.08), the ITM therefore proposes to establish "postdoctoral re-entry grants" (PRG), which should allow selected PhD graduates to start up and consolidate their career in their own country or region. Obviously, such a grant requires a commitment from the home institution as well. A career development plan, referring to the institutional strategic plan and FA3 project, should therefore be at the basis of the grant allocation. Wherever possible, the home institution should also financially contribute to the re-entry grant. Ideally, it should gradually take over the entire funding by the end of the grant.

As the institutional partners under FA3 vary in terms of status and resources, the rules for the re-entry grants should be flexible. The proposal below is therefore a framework, setting general standards, minima and maxima, adaptable to the situation of the candidate and the host institute. The specific institutional conditions for the PRG's will be laid down in the institutional FA3 contract.

The PRG scheme does not constitute a separate part or budget of the FA3. Each PRG is to be integrated in the IC project plan and budget. The recipient of the PRG is in all cases administratively and legally dependent of the home institute, in a status appropriate to the national laws and regulations (employee, fellow or other). The recipient is not an employee of the ITM nor is there in any other way a labour relationship or duties between the ITM and the recipient. The grantee is not a student either, in the sense of participant in a structured course with a diploma outcome. However, the ITM maintains a scientific relation as a collaborator and co-supervisor, and the grantee can thus be considered and labelled as a "post-doctoral trainee" of the ITM.

Proposed general conditions

1. Postdoctoral re-entry grants under FA3 are restricted to scientists who have obtained their PhD under an Institutional Collaboration (IC) project of the FA2 and FA3 programme. The application must be submitted within two years of the PhD graduation.
2. The application must be part or annex of the institutional project, as defined in (or adapted from) the FA3 IC proposal. The funding should be part of the budget allocated to the project.
3. The proposal should include minimally the following activities:
 - Development and implementation and/or supervision of a research programme and group, including grant and paper writing
 - Gradually evolving contribution to teaching and / or training activities of the home institution
 - Contribution to the planning, implementation and coordination of the FA3, at the project as well as at the programme level
 - Maintaining and strengthening the collaboration between the home institution, the ITM and other FA3 partners
 - Expected outcome in terms of projects, publication, teaching and others.
4. The application must be submitted on the appropriate form by the candidate, and include a career development plan consistent with the institutional development plan and FA3 project. It must be supported and countersigned by one promoter at the home institute and one at the ITM, which thereby also declare the scientific, administrative and operational approval of their respective departments. The director or other legal responsible of the home institute shall sign the proposal or a declaration attesting the conformity and feasibility of the proposal within the institutional development plan.
5. The grant will be awarded for a period 1 to 3 years, and become part of the FA3 contract, project description and mutual obligations between the ITM and the home institute. Performance and progress will be evaluated annually, with the possibility to take corrective measures or to end the grant. Grants to recipients, particularly those in Low Income Countries can be renewed for another 1 to 3 years, provided these renewals can be motivated by institutional needs and longer-term perspectives.
6. The personal allowance will preferably follow existing rules and rates of the home institution, which shall be documented. If these do not exist or cannot be reasonably applied, the rate will be determined between the ITM and the home institute, referring to comparable positions in the institution or the country.
7. The maximal contribution of the ITM to the personal allowance is limited to 1.500 Euro per month (indexed according with FA3 regulations) in as far as the total net earnings of the grantee (total grant allowance, other local salaries and income) do not exceed 2.500 Euro (FA3-indexed). *[Under discussion: These amounts are increased with ... Euro/month per dependent, up to a maximum of 300 euro]*. The home institution is expected to increase progressively its contribution to the grant in view of long-term sustainability.

8. The grant, including the ITM contribution, is administered and disbursed by the home institution. Upon written and motivated request of the home institution, the ITM can disburse its part directly on the account of the recipient for a short or longer period, however contingent to the legal exclusion of any labour relationship between the ITM and the grantee.
9. The scientific supervision of the grantee will be a shared responsibility between the promoters of the home institute and the ITM. All scientific projects and activities of the grantee, including those with third parties and funders, shall be notified *a priori* to both promoters. The intellectual property rights emanating from the PRG are shared according to the IPR regulations of the FA3 and the institutional contract.
10. The grantee can be entitled to a personal operational budget of maximum 500 Euro per month to cover daily expenses, which are accountable according to the general FA3 rules and regulations. All other costs of the post-doctoral projects have to be integrated in the institutional collaboration project or covered by other sources.
11. The candidate is legally and administratively based in the home institution. For all due purposes, the grantee can be considered and labelled as a (joint) "post-doctoral trainee" of the ITM.
12. Stays in Belgium can be planned in function of the scientific needs. Their cumulative duration shall not exceed 3 months per calendar year. During stays in Belgium, the grantee shall not perform employee duties for the ITM, including teaching in structural courses or consultancies not related to the PRG project, without being properly contracted and remunerated as an external lecturer or consultant. However, the grantee is allowed to give occasional guest lectures, to participate in scientific seminars and any other activity which can normally be expected from any visiting scientist, or considered as part of postdoctoral training.
13. During stays in Belgium, the grantee is entitled to the regular (short- or long-term) FA3 per diems for visitors and trainees from partner institutes. The ITM will also cover health and accident insurance, at least during these stays in Belgium and in motivated cases for the full duration of the grant. These costs will be planned in and covered by the ITM part of the IC project. Travel costs to other countries must be covered by the IC budget, the PRG operational budget, of other FA3 budgets (networks, meetings, training...).
14. As a transitional provision for the first year of the FA3, PRG's can be allocated to recent PhD graduates of FA2 from the date of 1.1.08, if comparable postdoctoral were included in the IC proposals. Letters to that effect need to be exchanged between the directors of the ITM and the partner institution, as an annex to the IC contract, before 31.1.08. These grantees shall complete a full and consistent PRG application before 30.6.08.