



EPFL

Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme

Tenure Track Pilot Programme

The Report Evaluation Manual

Criteria for evaluation of sub-projects and
Principal Investigators

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The “Research Excellence Programme in Science and Higher Education – the Tenure Track Pilot Programme” (hereinafter: TTPP) is a joint initiative of the Croatian Science Foundation (hereinafter: the Foundation), École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), the Swiss Development Agency (SDC) and the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (MoSE). The aim of the TTPP is to introduce the tenure track model into the Croatian higher education system. Tenure track is the right granted to selected assistant professors to have their performance evaluated for possible promotion to the rank of tenured (associate) professor. Three projects are funded through this Programme, which were selected following a public call.

Project Implementation Guidelines for TTPP Principal Investigators (hereinafter: PI Guidelines), which were adopted by the Board of the Croatian Science Foundation at its 140th session, held on 14th June 2019 and amended at the 141st session held on 10th July 2019, describe, among other things, the reporting obligations of the Principal Investigator (Chapter 7).

The present document is intended as a follow-up on the PI Guidelines, in which the criteria used for the evaluation of sub-projects and of the Principal Investigator (hereinafter: PI) will be described in detail.

1. Reporting obligations of the Principal Investigator:

The Croatian Science Foundation regularly monitors the implementation of all projects it funds through periodic reports submitted by principal investigators. Within the Tenure Track Pilot Programme, as defined in the PI Guidelines (p. 11), the PIs are required to submit Financial Reports of their projects to the Foundation on an annual basis, while narrative project reports (hereinafter: Scientific Reports) are due for the following periods: Scientific Report #1 after Project month 12, Scientific Report #2 after Project month 30, Scientific Report #3 after 30 November 2023 and Final Scientific Report at the end of the Project (all projects are due to finish on 30 April 2024).

Scientific reports inform on the advancement of the Project, providing information about the timelines and progress made in implementing the research plan as well as the establishment and running of the PI's new laboratory.

Financial reports (Attachments 2A-2D to PI Guidelines) compare expenditures with the approved budgets and are checked against the guidelines established at the start of the programme and against initially set objectives of all Principal Investigators and their research groups.

The financial reports are checked by the Office of the Foundation to verify the eligibility of the costs as well as the amount of unspent and improperly spent funds. The scientific reports are sent to external evaluation. Upon completion of the evaluation process, the Board of the Foundation shall adopt a decision on the resumption of financing and establish the amount of the next instalment.

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Apart from this, the Tenure Track Pilot Programme envisages mid-term and final evaluation of the PIs themselves, which are scheduled after month 30 of the Project and at the end of the Project respectively. For this purpose, the PIs will need to submit separate reports (Attachment 4 to PI Guidelines). These reports will be evaluated by external reviewers. The outcome of the mid-term evaluation of the PI will affect the resumption of financing, while the outcome of the final evaluation would lead to his/her election into a tenured position (if such a provision is provided for in national legislation in force at the time of the evaluation).

2. Project reports

2.1. Submission of reports

As described in the PI Guidelines, the scientific report comprises of two parts: a descriptive report form (Attachment 1A/1B/1C to PI Guidelines) and the accompanying table used for collecting information about the progress of the Project during the reporting period (Attachment 1D to PI Guidelines). The information provided in the descriptive report should at all times correspond to the information provided in the financial reports.

All doctoral students financed by the Foundation are subject to continuous monitoring. For this reason, the PI should, in addition to the Scientific Report, also submit the Doctoral Student's Progress Report Form (Attachment 3 to PI Guidelines), separately for each doctoral student employed on the Project.

2.2. Evaluation of reports

The scientific reports will be evaluated according to standard procedures of the Croatian Science Foundation, as described in the [Project Monitoring Manual](#). The reports will be evaluated by two external evaluators (Croatian and/or international scientists), who are nominated by independent monitoring experts assigned to each project. The form that the evaluators will use when assessing the reports is attached to this document as Appendix 1A. After the evaluators have finished their evaluation, the independent monitoring expert compiles their marks and comments into one and proposes a final mark to the Foundation's Board.

The following criteria will be used when evaluating the reports:

1. Achievement of the Project's objectives and work plan
 - a. Have the objectives envisaged in the subject project period been accomplished?
 - b. Are there any deviations in the implementation of the Work Plan?
 - c. If yes, are such deviations justifiable?
2. Project implementation

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- a. Has dissemination and collaboration been implemented according to the Project's Work Plan, have team members underwent professional development as envisaged in the Work Plan?
- b. Have Project results been published according to the Project's Work Plan?
3. Progress of doctoral students (based on the Doctoral Student's Progress Report Form)
 - a. Is the doctoral student's participation in Project activities appropriate and successful?
 - b. Is the doctoral student making progress with his doctoral studies?
 - c. Are the doctoral student's dissemination activities satisfactory?

On the basis of the criteria above, the project can be awarded one of the following marks:

A – Excellent progress (the project achieved all the objectives set for the reporting period or even exceeded them; financing to resume)

B – Good progress (the project achieved the majority of objectives set for the period; financing to resume)

C – Acceptable progress (the project achieved some of the objectives, but there are major deviations in implementation which reflect the planned activities; financing to resume if the amendments recommended below are taken into account)

D – Insufficient progress (the project failed to achieve the key objectives set for the reporting period or is not being implemented in accordance with the Work Plan; financing should not resume).

If the previous report was awarded mark A, in the next reporting period the Principal Investigator should submit the Descriptive Report Form – A (Attachment 1B to PI Guidelines). If the previous report was awarded mark C, the PI should submit an Exceptional Report (Attachment 1C to PI Guidelines) after six months, which will also be subject to evaluation.

3. Reports on the Principal Investigator's Progress

3.1. Submission of reports

The PI shall submit narrative reports on his/her progress for the mid-term evaluation in mid-2022 and for the final evaluation before the Project end date. The report will consist of the Principal Investigator's Report Form (Attachment 4 to PI Guidelines) and accompanying documentation.

The report form consists of the following parts:

1. Teaching
 - a. Extent of teaching activities: please describe the extent of teaching activities as well as the teaching content and materials.
 - b. Pedagogical skills and methods: please describe the pedagogical methods you used, supervision of seminars, semester projects or Master projects.

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- c. Have any new questions arisen? If yes, which? Explain in detail if it became evident that teaching activities or pedagogical methods should be changed and how this would affect further development of teaching skills.
2. Research
 - a. Depth and impact of research: please explain in detail research activities and main achievements, technological innovations, technology transfer and patents, interdisciplinary activities, international/national partnerships and collaborations, additional funding received (Croatian Science Foundation, industrial support, EU, etc.) and laboratory research portfolio development, impact of publications (bibliometrics), invited lectures and prizes received.
 - b. Supervision of doctoral and post-doctoral research group members: please explain the involvement of doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers in the Project activities, their obligations, etc
3. Potential
 - a. Scientific/educational/technological development: please state and briefly explain the educations/trainings/conferences, etc. attended/organised, usage and introduction of new technologies within your research, etc.
 - b. Principal Investigator's vision: Please describe your further research plans, both until the end of the Project and after it. For example, Project activities to be implemented, participation in activities of the Host Organisation, new collaborations, new applications, vision about research in the field of research, etc.
4. Miscellaneous
 - a. Miscellaneous activities: please state and briefly explain your participation in activities of general interest to the Host Organisation and/or activities serving the scientific community, number of reviewed articles, your human resources, financial and Project management skills developed within the implementation of Project (explain how these were developed/improved), spin-offs creation, etc.
 - b. State the possible risks to the realization of the Work Plan in the following period and what is intended to be done for eliminating those risks.
 - c. List the evaluators' recommendations from the previous report and describe how you applied them (applicable only for the final report): this question can be left empty in the mid-term report.

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3.1.1. Supporting documentation (Candidature file)

The report form should be accompanied by a candidature file, which enables the evaluators to finish their work more effectively and more rapidly. The candidature file should contain the following supporting documents, each as a separate document, all in English:

1. The Principal Investigator's Curriculum Vitae,
2. Publication list: (i) Articles in peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings, (ii) Reviews, (iii) Books and book chapters, (iv) Other publications such as reports, abstracts or other contributions to proceedings,
3. Copy (links or pdfs) of three publications the PI considers most representative of his/her work with a summary description of their importance and original character,
4. List of invited lectures at international conferences,
5. List of prizes and academic honours,
6. List of Master and doctoral students supervised,
7. List of additional sources of financing attracted in the reporting period,
8. Collaborations achieved with other research groups and institutions,
9. Other professional activities (editorial boards, conference and workshop organisation, guest editorials, etc.),
10. List of administrative activities,
11. A detailed academic career plan for the next period: Teaching (free form),
12. A detailed academic career plan for the next period: Research (free form),
13. Vision about future research in your area of investigation,
14. Reports from the two mentors (free form, signed by each mentor). The mentors should shortly introduce themselves and the PI, quantify the candidate's abilities, especially with respect to other scientists who have achieved success in the field, address the requirements of the PI's position, especially with respect to the Project and to the obligations within the Host Organisation.

3.2. Mid-term and final evaluation of PIs

Mid-term and final evaluation of the Principal Investigators will be organized by the Foundation and the EPFL. The evaluation process should not last longer than six months following the deadline of submission of the candidature file. The mid-term and the final evaluation will be carried out following the same procedure.

The evaluation of the projects will be performed by independent, international experts, proposed jointly by EPFL and the Foundation. Independent experts must meet the following criteria:

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- ✓ Appropriate skills and knowledge within the areas of activity in which they are asked to assist
- ✓ High level of professional experience (public or private sector) in scientific research, scholarship, and/or scientific management
- ✓ Appropriate language skills required for the tasks to be carried out.

Each PI will be evaluated by an expert panel consisting of the following members:

- three independent international experts (with voting rights),
- one or two representative(s) of the Host Organization (with observer status)
- one representative of the Croatian Science Foundation (with observer status)
- one representative of EPFL (with observer status).

The following criteria will apply in the evaluation process:

Teaching

- quality and extent of teaching activities, based in particular on evaluation by the students and in-depth evaluation by panel,
- quality of teaching content, quality of teaching material,
- creativity as far as pedagogical skills and methods are concerned,
- participation in activities of general interest specific to the curriculum.

Research

- scientific (or artistic) quality and creativity, originality, depth and impact of research,
- technological innovations and patents and other transferable skills,
- interdisciplinarity,
- scientific reputation at international level,
- measured impact of publications (bibliometrics), invited lectures and prizes received,
- funding received (Croatian Science Foundation, industrial support, EU, etc.) and laboratory research portfolio development,
- quality of supervision toward doctoral and post-doctoral research group members,
- collaboration skills (internal & external).

Potential

- candidate's scientific development,
- development in education,
- technological development,
- candidate's vision.

Miscellaneous activities

- participation in activities of general interest to the institution,
- quality of the unit's human and financial resource management,
- participation in activities serving the scientific community,

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- role in creating spin-offs.

The Foundation will inform each Principal Investigator about the outcome of the evaluation not later than six months after the submission deadline of the report. PIs negatively evaluated at the mid-term evaluation will be granted a short period (not exceeding six months) to terminate their work at the Host Organization and to re-orient their career. PIs who are positively evaluated at the end of their Project will be considered to meet all the criteria required for election into a tenured position at the Host Organization. Their election would ultimately depend on the legislation in force in Croatia at the time of the evaluation.

Enquiries and complaints about the evaluation procedures

Inquiries and complaints have to be addressed to the Foundation in writing. The Foundation may convene an internal evaluation review committee to examine specific cases that have been submitted by the PI in question. The committee is to consist of the Foundation's staff with the requisite scientific/technical and legal expertise and a representative of EPFL, all of whom were not involved in the original evaluation process. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of such requests and equal, objective treatment. It provides specialist opinion of the implementation of the evaluation process on the basis of all the available information related to the project and its evaluation. The committee works independently. The committee itself, however, does not evaluate the PIs performance. If the committee considers that there has been a failing in the evaluation process that may have influenced the decision, it may suggest a further evaluation by the independent experts. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the committee may review the CVs of the independent experts, their individual comments, and the evaluation report, while preserving fully the anonymity of experts or referees. The committee will not call into question the scientific judgement of appropriately qualified panels of experts.

Confidentiality of evaluation

Any direct or indirect contact about the evaluation between the PI and/or any team member on one hand, and any expert involved in the evaluation is strictly forbidden.

The candidate's evaluation file will be accessible only to the persons involved as experts in the evaluation process. Neither the candidates nor any person acting on their behalf may access the evaluation file.

Documents containing evaluations or information related to the evaluation of candidates and their performance, and all opinions expressed orally, are strictly confidential. All persons participating in the evaluations are required to guarantee strict confidentiality and the candidate accepts not to request access to confidential referee letters or to be given the identity of referees

The purpose of these measures is to protect the candidate and the quality and reliability of the opinions expressed by the experts and persons evaluating the candidate.