

RULES AND REGULATIONS

FRESH (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH FUND)

DOCTORAL GRANTS

ADOPTED BY

THE F.R.S.-FNRS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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CHAPTER I: SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE GRANT

Article 1

The rules and regulations hereinafter are only applicable to holders of a FRESH grant from the Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS).

The FRESH Fund supports basic research projects whose outcomes are likely to improve the understanding or functioning of one sector in the society in the short-medium term at a local, regional, national or international level, from many perspectives such as culture, economy, politics, sociology and psychosociology.

The granting of a FRESH grant is intended for the completion of the Ph.D. within 4 years. People with disabilities are allowed to complete their Ph.D. working part time over up to six years, if it has been agreed upon with the promoter.

Article 2

FRESH grants are strictly restricted to holders of an academic degree who aim to carry out fundamental research projects with significant societal impact, using tools provided by human and social sciences. For this purpose, they shall pursue their studies leading to a Ph.D. in a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium under the supervision of a promoter and a postdoctoral¹ co-promoter (if any) from one of the institutions listed in [Appendix 1](#).

The promoter must meet the following conditions altogether:

- Be permanently appointed² to an academic or scientific position or on probation in that university.
- This appointment must have a final and conclusive assent from the competent body to legitimize this appointment in accordance with the Law or the university regulations by the time of the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) at the latest.
- This academic or scientific position must be effective by the time of the starting date of the grant, i.e., by 1st October of the year of the FRESH Call concerned at the latest.

The researcher-promoter of a Ulysse Incentive Grant for Mobility in Scientific Research (MISU) who genuinely carries out the fellowship by the time of the starting date of the grant, i.e., by 1st October of the year of the FRESH Call concerned at the latest, may be promoter of an applicant to a FRESH Grant.

A FED-tWIN laureate whose fellowship is ongoing once the FRESH grant begins, meaning by 1st October at the latest, can apply as promoter of a FRESH applicant.

FED-tWIN fellowship specific provisions

If the promoter's FED-tWIN fellowship expires after the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) and before the end of the funding period if granted, the submission of an application is conditional

¹ The postdoctoral level must be reached by 1st October of the year of the FRESH Call concerned at the latest.

² Research logisticians of rank A, as defined by the Royal Decree of 31st October 1953 fixing 'le statut des agrégés, des répétiteurs et des membres du personnel scientifique des universités de l'État', are not eligible as promoters of doctoral grants.

on the designation of a replacement able to ensure the continuity of the research project as promoter in the event that the fellowship holder no longer meets the eligibility criteria upon the end of their fellowship

Retirement and emeritus status specific provisions

If the promoter of a FRESH applicant who is appointed permanently accesses the legal age of retirement / becomes professor emeritus after the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) and before the end of the funding in case of granting, the submission of the application shall be subject to prior approval by the Head of institution where the research will be carried out.

The promoter permanently appointed who will access the legal age of retirement / become professor emeritus by the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) is not eligible.

CHAPTER II: CANDIDACY AND DURATION OF THE GRANT

Article 3

FRESH Grants are accessible to holders of one of the following degrees:

-1° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the French-speaking Community of Belgium;

-2° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the Dutch-speaking Community of Belgium, German-speaking Community of Belgium or from the Royal Military Academy.

-3° A master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania³.

-4° Any degree as referred to in Article 115 of the Decree of 7 November 2013 of the French-speaking Community of Belgium that defines the landscape of Higher Education and the academic studies organisation.

Applicants who hold a degree as referred to in paragraph 1, 1°, 2° and 3° are required to provide a certificate of achievement or a copy of the diploma. The document must be enclosed in the application file by 30th September of the year the application is submitted at the latest.

Applicants who hold a degree as referred to in paragraph 1, 4° are required to provide a registration document or a certificate that enables the admission to doctoral programmes issued by the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium where the studies will be carried out along with a certificate of achievement or a copy of all degrees. Both documents must be enclosed in the application file by 30th September of the year the application is submitted at the latest.

³ In accordance with the Brussels Treaty on the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications between the Benelux countries and the Baltic States, which came into force on 1st May 2024.

Article 4

Applicants to a FRESH grant must have obtained an academic degree as referred to in Article 3 for maximum 7 years, provided that this period is completed between 1st October of year N-7 and 30th September of year N included (given that year N is the year of the FRESH call in question)⁴.

The maximum period used to calculate eligibility based on the required academic seniority is extended by:

- 15 months per childbirth regardless of the number of children per delivery
- 12 months per child for whom the applicant is a parent⁵ (as a legal parent, co-parent, adoptive mother or father, adoptive co-parent, or any other form of legal parenthood established by recognition or court decision) and whom the applicant did not give birth to;
- 12 months for applicants who have taken in one or more children at the same time as foster parents⁶, designated as such by the court, by an accredited placement service of the competent community, or by a community service responsible for youth protection (youth welfare services, Special Youth Assistance Committee), in the context of a long-term placement.

These extensions are cumulative.

Article 5

Each applicant whose application to a FRESH call⁷ has not been ranked within the 70% of the best applications during the preselection phase by the jury is not allowed to apply to the following FRESH call.

Article 6

No applicant may apply for a FRESH and FRIA Grant during the same year.

No applicant may apply more than twice to a FRESH Grant.

No applicant who has previously applied to a 1st grant 2nd year may apply to a FRESH Grant, irrespective of whether the choice is made by:

- Applicants themselves when they apply (either they applied the previous year for a 1st grant 1st year or they worked full-time on their Ph.D. thesis);
- Or the jury which interviewed them, as per the [guide to juries](#).

Researchers who have been granted with a FRESH Grant, regardless of its duration, can no longer apply for such grant.

⁴ Example: for the 2026 FRESH call, year N-7 = 2019 and year N = 2026.

⁵ In case of multiple pregnancy, the non-birthing parent will have their eligibility extension capped at 12 months.

⁶ In the case of fostering siblings, the concerned parent will have their eligibility extension capped at 12 months.

⁷ Applicable from the 2026 call on.

Should an applicant withdraw their application after validation by the academic authorities and before the jury preselection meeting, they will not be allowed to apply again the following year because they will not be ranked with the 70% of the best applications.

No interruption may be possible between grants.

No applicant may apply for a 2nd Grant if they have not been granted with a 1st Grant.

FRESH Applicants who have not been granted with a 2nd Grant are not allowed to apply anymore.

Grantees may have their grant revoked as soon as they do no longer meet the granting terms and conditions.

No applicant may apply for a FRESH Grant if they successively received two Research Fellow fellowships (ASP + ASP-REN) of the F.R.S.-FNRS or two FRIA grants (1st + 2nd Grant).

Article 7

Ph.D. researchers can be granted successively with a grant twice maximum. The maximum duration of the 1st Grant is 27 months. The maximum duration of the 2nd Grant is 21 months.

The duration of the 1st Grant may be reduced to 15 months if the applicant applies to a FRESH Grant after one year of Ph.D.

The 2nd Grant can be allocated for less than 21 months but for a minimum term of 15 months.

For people with disabilities, the maximum duration of the 1st Grant is 39 months. The maximum duration of the 2nd Grant is 33 months. The duration of the 1st Grant may be reduced to 27 months if the applicant applies to a FRESH Grant after one year of Ph.D. The 2nd Grant can be allocated for less than 33 months but for a minimum term of 27 months.

Article 8

The call for FRESH applications is opened once a year and is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

Only one application for a 1st Grant can be submitted, in French or in English. It must only be submitted on [e-space](#), the online platform dedicated to the calls for proposals.

Applicants to a 2nd Grant are given access to the electronic form by the FRESH on [e-space](#).

Both 1st and 2nd Grant applications are submitted to a procedure including three successive electronic validations on the dates that will be indicated when the call is published:

- a) The validation by the applicant: it accounts as a confirmation that the applicant has submitted an application.
- b) The validation by the promoter selected pursuant to article 2: the F.R.S.-FNRS transfers the application to promoters so that they give their approval for the submitted research project and confirm the accuracy of data mentioned in the application file. The promoter may accept or refuse the application.
- c) The validation by the research administration (or Board of Education) of the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, to which the application file is transferred once promoters have given their consent. The academic authority may accept or refuse the application. The validation deadline fixed for the rectors puts a final end to the call for proposals.

Applications that have not been validated within the time-frame of the call cannot be taken into account.

No further change or modification to the proposal can be made after the validation deadline set for the applicant.

A mini-guide specifies the validation dates as well as the documents which must be included in the application.

Article 9

Applicants to a FRESH 1st Grant are required to take an oral examination. This oral examination takes place at the F.R.S.-FNRS and is based on the research project (feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan and activities report, if applicable), the applicant's profile with regard to their speciality (C.V.), their presentation and the answers given to questions regarding their research project, and their scientific knowledge in general.

Members of juries who evaluate the applicants are selected by the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees, upon the proposal of the Guidance Committee (COMA).

The FRESH requires the promoter and one additional professor or holder of Research Associate (CQ)/Senior Research Associate (MR)/Research Director (DR)⁸ fellowship of the F.R.S.-FNRS to give their opinion concerning the profile of applicants to a 1st Grant.

FRESH 2nd Grant renewal applications are examined by the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee).

The Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee) must complete a document which shall be attached to the electronic form for a Renewal application. This document must be duly completed and signed and sent to the research unit (or Board of Education) of the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium in order to be signed by the academic authorities. The latter must send the document to the FRESH by **31st October** of the year the application is submitted.

When the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium takes the ultimate decision for the applicant not to further continue doctoral studies and when the Rector notifies the FRESH in writing, the FRESH grant will expire at the end of the ongoing grant.

CHAPTER III: ALLOCATION OF THE GRANT

Article 10

1st Grants are allocated by the FRESH Board of Trustees in accordance with Article 9.

2nd Grants are allocated by the FRESH Board of Trustees upon the positive recommendation of the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee).

Article 11

FRESH 1st Grant starts on 1st October. The starting date may be postponed upon a duly justified request to the FRESH.

⁸ Chercheuse qualifiée / Chercheur qualifié - Research Associate (CQ), Maître de recherches - Senior Research Associate (MR) or Directrice de recherches / Directeur de recherches - Research Director (DR).

If the FRESH accepts a starting date for a grant running beyond 1st October⁹, the grant will be postponed by the number of months between 1st October and the actual starting date of the grant year, up to a maximum of 4 months (which means an actual starting date of no later than 31st January). No extension will be granted if the starting date of the grant is later than 1st February of the year following the grant year.

The 2nd Grant starts as from the 1st of January.

CHAPTER IV: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF FRESH GRANTEES

Article 12

Any research project being funded must observe statutory provisions in force governing ethics.

Article 13

FRESH Grantees are subordinated to the FRESH Board of Trustees, which acts through its President and the General Secretary of the F.R.S.-FNRS. They pledge to respect the rules and regulations in force within the Fund.

They must respect the discipline enforced by the academic authority of the institution where they work and observe its rules and regulations. As grantees of the F.R.S.-FNRS, they are also required to adhere to the regulation on the property, protection and promotion of the results from the research carried out within the institution.

Article 14

FRESH Grantees shall not take on any teaching position.

They must obtain a doctoral training certificate or get exempted from it in accordance with the Decree of 7 November 2013 and the specific provisions enacted in the doctoral regulations in force within the hosting institution.

Administrative work or tasks relating to didactic supervision within the host institution may be assigned to FRESH Grantees up to four hours per week on an annual average.

Since the FRESH grant aims at carrying out an original dissertation to obtain the title of Doctor, grantees shall not take any other exams than qualifying exams as part of their doctoral training and/or any additional training accredited by the relevant academic authority in their hosting institution.

Article 15

FRESH Grantees may not be a member of the scientific or academic staff in a university or an academic institution and may not receive any remuneration or salary.

However, the FRESH may, upon request, authorise them to receive full or part of the allowances that they may be entitled to have to study abroad.

FRESH Grantees may not carry out any professional activity and may not receive any remuneration or salary.

⁹ Applies to the grants awarded from the 2024 call.

Article 16

FRESH Grantees receive an operating credit, which is under the responsibility of their promoter.

The operating credit can only be allocated if the holder genuinely carries out the fellowship.

Article 17

On Augustus 31st at the latest every year, FRESH Grantees are required to submit a report on the scientific activities they have carried out along the year, except for the year of the renewal of the grant, as the report will be included in the renewal application. The activities report is to be uploaded on their personal [e-space](#) page.

Article 18

FRESH Grantees shall mention in their publications, papers and reprinted/e-print alike that they have been granted with a FRESH grant.

Article 19

FRESH Grantees who wish to study or pursue their research abroad must give prior notice to the FRESH on their personal [e-space](#) page at least 15 days before the actual date of departure.

For any stay, a prior agreement of the promoter must be sent to the FRESH and uploaded on e-space.

In case of a long-term stay (90 days or more), an agreement of the Head of the institution where the FRESH grantee carries out their research must also be submitted to the FRESH on e-space by the institution.

Article 20

Any change regarding the civil status, the family responsibility, the domicile or residence must be reported by the holder of a FRESH grant on their personal [e-space](#) page, as soon as possible.

Article 21

FRESH Grantees shall inform the FRESH of any interruption or suspension of their scientific activities as soon as they can and for any reason whatsoever.

Article 22

In case of illness or personal accident, a medical certificate attesting the starting date and the duration or extension of a period of professional incapacity must be submitted to the FRESH within 48 hours following the beginning of the incapacity period. The promoter shall send a copy of the medical certificate to the relevant department of the institution where the grantee carries out her/his research.

Article 23

In case of work accident, the administrative staff of the FRESH must be informed within 24 hours, by phone if necessary. The declaration of accident as well as the medical certificate establishing the accident must be sent to the Fund. The health department of the institution where the grantee carries out her/his research must be informed as well.

CHAPTER V: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Article 24

Grant amounts are determined once a year within the limit of the budget of the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

The amount of the grant is mentioned on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

FRESH Grantees shall give written notice to the FRESH of the date of their Ph.D. thesis dissertation and send a copy of their certificate of achievement to the secretariat of the FRESH.

One month after being graduated with a Ph.D., the grant amount of the FRESH grantee is increased in the same proportion that the scale for assistant professors who obtained their Ph.D.

Article 25

The FRESH grant is exempt from tax on income. The grant beneficiary is nonetheless subject to the employee social security scheme.

The FRESH grant is a fixed amount which includes holidays. FRESH grantees therefore do not depend on the private sector holiday legislation thus receive no holiday bonus.

Article 26

Grantees shall be remunerated on a monthly basis, in arrears.

For 1st Grant beneficiaries granted in December of the Year X with effect on 1st October of the Year X (see article 11), allocation of the grants due in October, November and December of the Year X will be made at the beginning of the Year X+1 in one instalment.

The grant is paid on a SEPA ("Single Euro Payments Area") euro bank account of their choice.

Any change of bank account number must be reported online by the FRESH Grantee on their personal [e-space](#) page.

CHAPTER VI: WORK ACCIDENTS

Article 27

FRESH Grantees are covered by an insurance contract as required by the law. This contract covers ordinary work risks during seminars or in laboratory as well as risks of accidents occurring on their way to work.

It also covers the risks incurred during temporary missions in Belgium and abroad. FRESH Grantees may travel by any common transportation (sea, air or road transport) authorised for people transportation, inasmuch as they are not members of the crew.

CHAPTER VII: INTERRUPTION DUE TO MATERNITY, PATERNITY OR ADOPTION LEAVE

Article 28

The FRESH grant interrupted due to maternity, paternity or adoption leave can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

The extension request must be reported at least one month before the grant expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

Article 29

During the maternity, paternity or adoption leave, the FRESH Grantee receives a replacement income paid by the mutual insurance company as from the time set by the law regarding sickness and invalidity insurance. In that case, the payment of the remuneration is immediately suspended.

To that end, FRESH Grantees shall give prior notice to their promoter and the FRESH of the starting date of their leave.

The Fund gives the FRESH Grantee in the situation mentioned above an extra payment to the indemnity provided by the mutual insurance company in order to compensate for the loss of income.

To that end, FRESH Grantees must provide the Fund with a certificate issued by the health care insurer (the mutual insurance company), mentioning both gross and net amounts of the maternity, paternity or adoption indemnity that they have received.

CHAPITRE VIII: INTERRUPTION FOR PROPHYLACTIC ANTENATAL LEAVE, PROPHYLACTIC BREASTFEEDING LEAVE OR BREASTFEEDING LEAVE FOR PERSONAL CONVENIENCE

Article 30

The FRESH grant interrupted due to a prophylactic antenatal leave, prophylactic breastfeeding leave and breastfeeding leave for personal convenience can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

The FRESH grant must request this extension at least a month before the fellowship expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

This extension will be granted upon reception of a medical certificate.

Prophylactic breastfeeding leave or breastfeeding leave for personal convenience cannot exceed 5 months from the day of the birth.

Article 31

During the prophylactic antenatal leave or the prophylactic breastfeeding leave, the FRESH grantees receive a replacement income paid by the mutual insurance company as from the time set by the law regarding sickness and invalidity insurance. In that case, the payment of the remuneration is immediately suspended.

To that end, the FRESH grantees shall give prior notice of the starting date of their leave to their promoter and the F.R.S.-FNRS.

The Fund gives the FRESH grantees in the aforementioned situation an extra payment to the indemnity provided by the mutual insurance company in order to compensate for the loss of income.

To that end, the FRESH grantees must provide the Fund with a certificate issued by the health care insurer (the mutual insurance company), mentioning the received amount of the prophylactic leave indemnity.

CHAPTER IX: SUSPENSION DUE TO PARENTAL LEAVE

Article 32

The FRESH grant interrupted due to parental leave can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.

A parental leave request must contain a letter from the promoter defining the modalities of the leave (form and period...).

The FRESH grant must request this extension at least a month before the grant expires. This extension agreement does not adversely affect the fixed-term nature of the grant.

CHAPTER X: SUSPENSION DUE TO ILLNESS FOR ONE MONTH OR MORE

Article 33

For recipients who obtained their grant before 2026, the FRESH grant interrupted for 30 days or more due to illness shall be extended for a period equal to that of the interruption.

For recipients who obtained their grant from 2026 on, the FRESH grant interrupted for 30 days or more due to illness shall be extended for a period equal to that of the interruption. The 30 first days of the interruption, which are paid by the FRESH, are not included in the extension of the grant.

This extension will be granted upon receipt of a medical certificate justifying the work incapacity for a period greater than 30 days.

The extension of the FRESH grant will be effective when the researcher returns to work, by signing a formal contract amendment stating the new ending date of the fellowship. The researcher will be required to send it to the FRESH for approval.

Article 34

Beyond the 1st month of the guaranteed remuneration, the FRESH will not pay allowance in addition to illness benefit from the social insurance.

CHAPTER XI: ANNUAL LEAVE

Article 35

The duration of the annual leave is equivalent to the calendar fixed in the hosting institution's rules of procedure. Periods of time are set by mutual agreement with the promoter. FRESH Grantees shall inform the FRESH Secretariat of their holiday dates.

CHAPTER XII: FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 36

FRESH Grantees may terminate their grant agreement at any time. They shall give a written notice of their decision to the FRESH, their promoter and the head of the institution where they have carried out their research programme.

Article 37

Only holders of a FRESH grant whose disability has been recognized by the General Management for People with disabilities ("Direction Générale Personnes handicapées"), at the Social Security service, part of the Federal Public Service, can request the adjustments allowed by article 1.

APPENDIX 1

Relevant Institutions for the co-promoter

Instrument: FRESH Grant

FRESH Cal

Bourse FRESH / FRESH Grant

Co-promoteur rice d'une université CFB / Co-promoter of a CFB university	➤ Universités de la Communauté française de Belgique (CFB) Universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB) Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Université de Liège (ULiège) Université de Mons (UMons) Université de Namur (UNamur)
Co-promoteur rice (de régime linguistique francophone) attaché e à l'une de ces institutions / French speaking co-promoter attached to one of these institutions	➤ École royale militaire (E.R.M.) ➤ Établissements scientifiques fédéraux State Scientific Institutions Archives de l'État (AE) Institut d'Aéronomie spatiale de Belgique (I.A.S.) Institut royal météorologique de Belgique (I.R.M.) Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (I.R.P.A.) Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique (I.R.S.N.B.) KBR (Bibliothèque royale de Belgique) Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (M.R.A.C.) Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (M.R.A.H.) Musées royaux des Beaux-arts de Belgique (M.R.B.A.B.) Observatoire royal de Belgique (O.R.B.) ➤ Centre d'Étude de l'énergie Nucléaire (SCK-CEN) ➤ Centre wallon de Recherches agronomiques (CRA-W) ➤ LABIRIS ➤ Agence Jardin botanique de Meise ➤ Musée royal de Mariemont ➤ Sciensano