



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships 2022: Tips for a winning proposal from an evaluator's perspective

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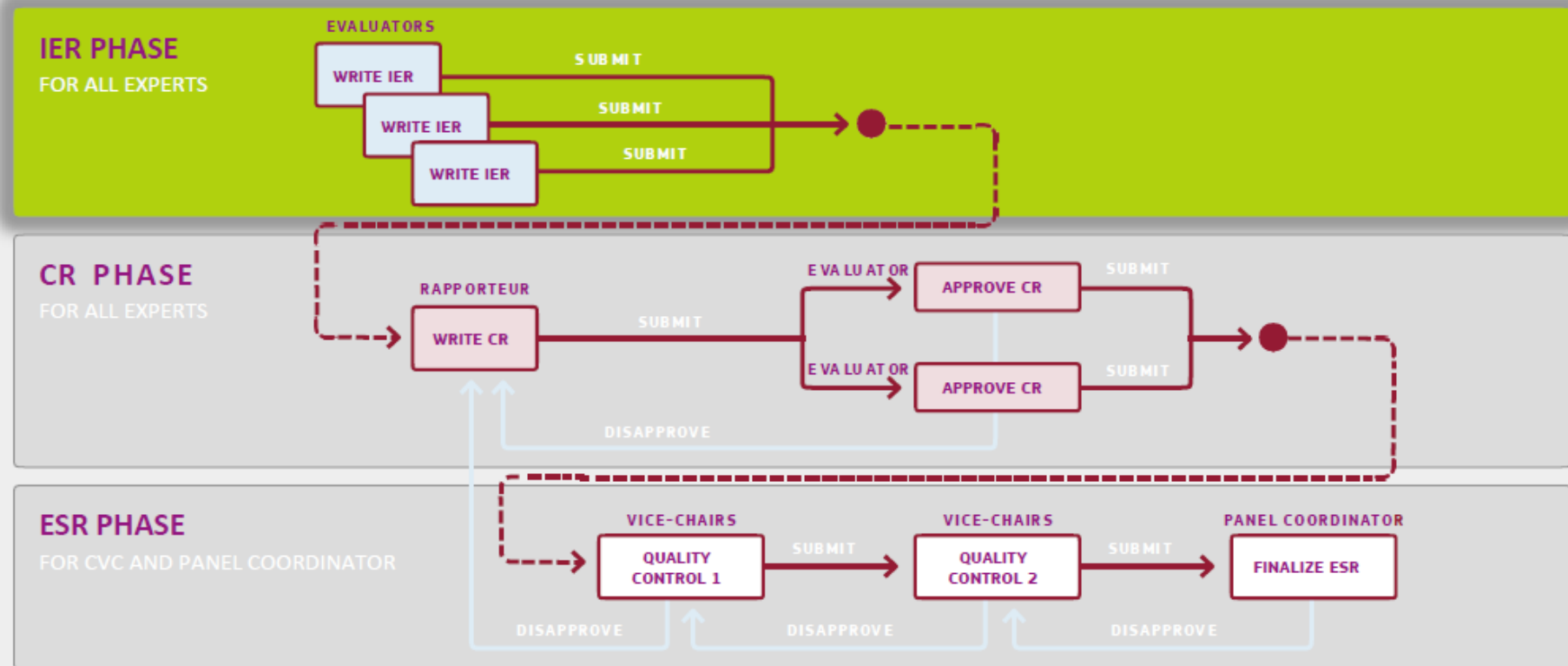


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Evaluation stages

2. INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION IN PRACTICE



IER: Individual Evaluation Report
CR: Consensus Report
ESR: Evaluation Summary Report
CVC: Chair and Vice Chairs



About evaluators

- Understand the evaluation process: 3 evaluators (1 of them acts as a rapporteur – drafts and finalises the consensus report; quality control performed by rapporteur's Vice-Chair), discussion facilitated by the Chair of the panel
- Already a complicated process with **VERY** limited time available
- Suitable evaluators for a proposal are basically chosen by searching for keywords on the Commission Experts Database
- For interdisciplinary research: experts may only be expert in one of the disciplines covered by your research
- The evaluator wants to see you demonstrating that you are the expert
- Communicate the novelty and relevance of the work very clearly
- Make it easy for evaluators to complete their individual evaluation report and reach a consensus – They evaluate applications by identifying **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** in every sub-criterion.



Criterion 1

EXCELLENCE - weighted 50% is about:

- quality and pertinence of the R&I objectives
- soundness of the methodology
- relevance of interdisciplinary approaches, gender and diversity aspects
- quality of the planned open science practices
- quality of the supervision
- the researcher's existing professional experience



Criterion 2 & Criterion 3

IMPACT - weighted 30% is about:

- The enhancement of the researcher's career perspectives and skills development expected through the proposal implementation
- Dissemination, exploitation and communication of the research
- Direct scientific, societal and economic impact of the proposal

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION - weighted 20% is about:

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan
- Risk assessment and contingency plan
- Quality and capacity of all participating organisations, including non-scientific hosting arrangements



Submission recipes

- Give yourself plenty of time to write the proposal.
Proposal isn't finished until deadline: **submit often** and **revise often**
- Read carefully: the Call text, Guide for Applicants and a past-year's Manual to Evaluators – they don't change much, **details matter**.
- MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship has a high focus on the fellow: Show that **you** personally are worth **investing** in.
- Ask many people for feedback on the proposal:
 1. Your **supervisor** is the project PI: work together very closely
 2. Take feedback from **experts** as well as **non-experts** before you submit it: people with less direct experience of the research topic may pick up on the same things that evaluators will not understand
 3. Try to take advice from **successful applicants**
 4. Talk to the EU **grant support office at your host institution**



Personal feeling / testimony

A few worth-mentioned changes from *Horizon 2020* to *Horizon Europe*:

- Open science practices to be addressed/evaluated under sub-criterion 1.2
 - Open science practices should be implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology. Therefore, they must be assessed under the criterion *Excellence*
- Sub-criterion 2.3 to assess impact on societal and economic levels, along with scientific impact

It is necessary that:

- Research and innovation objectives should be realistically achievable, measurable and verifiable
- For criterion 2.2.: the dissemination, exploitation and communication measures have to be concrete and proportionate to the scale of the project
(both points are in line with the evaluator guidelines)



Personal feeling / testimony

IMHO, it is highly desirable to:

- Demonstrate applicant's personal expertise in the field by including relevant references from their PhD / previous postdocs in *Excellence*
- Imply somehow, right from the start, the strong involvement of your supervisor in writing the proposal along with their firm commitment
- State explicitly that you are addressing a sub-criterion, making evaluator's life easier!

A few examples:

- The proposed work goes well-beyond the current state of the art in the field since...
- My expected career perspectives inside academia will be greatly enhanced because ...
- My expected career perspectives outside academia will be greatly enhanced because ...
- The above mentioned measures will decisively contribute to the development of my skills because ...



Make it easy

- Make your text **interesting** and **easy to read**.
- **Have your English checked before submitting.**
- Be sparing with **references** – they take up space and evaluators are unlikely to read them. Choose only the most important ones.
- **Use bold, italic and underline to highlight important points.**
- Demonstrate that your chosen host and mentor will provide the **right environment** for **you** to be successful.
- **Be specific** about your supervisor, host institution and external partners. Describe why they are most suited to hosting your project and how they will **support** it. For example, access to infrastructure, IP support, training, institutional seminars, science communication support and so on.

[Brian Cahill, *Tips & Tricks for a Winning Proposal*]

Info Day on MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships
Online event, 12 April 2022



Make it easy

- The first pages should be **exciting**. State of the Art must be very closely linked to pitching your ideas and answering the questions ‘why is this research important’ and ‘how will your research ideas solve the problem?’
- A good abstract pitches the idea and creates **curiosity** and **excitement**.
- **Explicitly cover all the subcriteria** in the proposal template.
- A poorly structured proposal is difficult for evaluators to understand.
- Every word/sentence counts. **Don’t waste space** on anything irrelevant.
- **Clear** and **convincing** objectives.
- **Graphics** often illustrate concepts more clearly than words.
- Make sure you get **layout** and **readability** right.

[Brian Cahill, *Tips & Tricks for a Winning Proposal*]

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References

1. MSCA Call
2. Guide for Applicants
3. Manual to Evaluators
4. Dr Brian Cahill, TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A WINNING PROPOSAL (available online)
5. Dr Achilleas Hadjikyriacou, MSC actions of the EU: Tips for applicants from an evaluator's perspective (2021)



Good luck with your MSCA PF application!!!



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