

**Q&A with panel members**  
**FWO PhD fellowships strategic**  
**basic research**  
**2026**

April 28, 2026 – classification 2

# About this Q&A

## ▶ **Who?**

- Inge Geurden
- Gerrit Pierreux
- Frederik Van Acker
- Fran Van den Bergh
- You! Panel members

## ▶ **What?**

## ▶ **How?**

# **Part I – At a glance**

**PhD fellowships strategic basic  
research**

# PhD fellowships strategic basic research



## Main goal

To support young researchers in exploring independent **strategic basic research** ideas while further **developing their research skills** and innovation-oriented mindset through activities such as research, training & mobility, ultimately leading to a **doctoral degree**.

## Characteristics

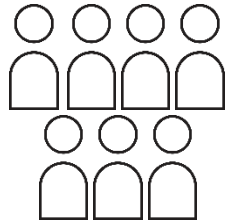
- ✓ Until 3 years after relevant diploma (master)
- ✓ Maximum of 18 months of scientific experience
- ✓ 4-year fellowships
- ✓ 26 thematic panels; equal success rate in all panels (for this call: 23%)

# PhD fellowships strategic basic research

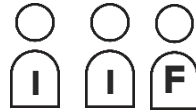


## Assessment of proposals:

### EVALUATORS



**Expert panel**



Three internal reviewers

One responsible for feedback (F)

# PhD fellowships strategic basic research



- **The scores are weighted**

**Candidate (50%)**

.../7



**Project (30%)**

.../7

**Application Potential (20%)**

.../7

Threshold score for being funded is 4, for each of the three criteria

# **Part II – What is new?**

# New aspects from 2026 onwards

## ▶ **Formal requirements**

new

- Need to be respected
- Ineligible when visibly deviating
- Applies during review process as well

## ▶ **Open Science**

new

- E.g., DMP, CV, methods

# **Part III – Sundry topics**

## Avoid inflating the scores



- ▶ **Make sure the scores are:**

- accurate and not overstated

- in line with the evaluation criteria outlined in the score grid

- ▶ **Serious flaw or shortcoming**

- score lower than 4!

- ▶ **The scores should be helpful in differentiating the various applications**

# A project needs to be evaluated on its merits

- ▶ **The assessment should be based on what is written in the application**

- Avoid filling in the gaps or making assumptions, e.g. on the socio-economic benefit of the topic



## Final year students vs early-career researchers

- ▶ **The programme is open for both final year MSc students and early-career researchers**

- Students in their final MSc year typically have less scientific achievements

- Statistics show a reduced success rate in preselection

- ▶ **Consider the scientific seniority of the candidate when assessing the application**

## A project can be considered out-of-scope

- ▶ **The applicant is responsible for the panel choice (based on contribution to SOTA)**

- When a proposal falls outside the scope of the panel, the application can be considered out-of-scope
- Only when panel is unable to assess the proposal
- “There may be a better panel” not a good reason: many proposals are multidisciplinary

- ▶ **An out-of-scope:**

- Inform the panel moderator before the preselection
- Consensus required within panel

## Feedback to the applicants

Feedback



Preselection

Interview

- ▶ **Strengths**
- ▶ **Weaknesses**
- ▶ **(Interview findings)**
- ▶ **Suggestions for improvement**

→ Should reflect the final consensus score



**(( Live Q&A ))**

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**Thank you for your  
participation**

## Parallel funding

- ▶ **Applicants are allowed to apply for other funding**
- ▶ **Panels need to ensure that the research is not funded twice**
  - Panel: decides on overlap
  - FWO: avoids double funding