



Pasqual Maragall Researchers Programme

Evaluation Procedure

2022 Call




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1. Definitions

Please find below a definition of various terms used throughout the Pasqual Maragall Researchers Programme 2022 Call Evaluation Guidelines.

- **Foundation** – the Pasqual Maragall Foundation.
- **Call** – the 2022 Pasqual Maragall Researchers Programme (PMRP) Call.
- **Individual Research Project** – a research project carried out by one Research Team led by a single Principal Investigator.
- **Collaborative Research Project** – a research project carried out by a Consortium of two to three Research Teams and coordinated by a single Consortium Coordinator. Each Research Team must be from a different institution.
- **Research Team** – a group of individuals at an institution, led by a Principal Investigator, who undertake activities to directly contribute to the research project.
- **Consortium** – a group composed of a maximum of three Research Teams that perform a Collaborative Research Project led by a single Consortium Coordinator. Each Research Team must be from a different institution. Each Research Team at a Partner Institution must be led by a different Consortium Principal Investigator.
- **Principal Investigator (PI)** – the Principal Investigator of an Individual Research Project, responsible for the submission of the application to the Pasqual Maragall Research Foundation and the overall execution of the research project.
- **Consortium Coordinator (CC)** – the lead Principal Investigator of a Collaborative Research Project, responsible for the submission of the application to the Pasqual Maragall Foundation, the execution of the research project at the Host Institution, and the overall coordination and execution of the Collaborative Research Project.
- **Consortium Principal Investigator (cPI)** – a Principal Investigator of a Collaborative Research Project, responsible for carrying out the research project at their organisation (Partner Institution) but not for the overall coordination and execution of the Collaborative Research Project.
- **Research Organisation** – an organisation that carries out research as part of its usual activity (e.g. research centre, foundation, university, hospital).
- **Host Institution** – an organisation with overall responsibility for a research project (*i.e.*, the organisation of the Principal Investigator (PI) of an Individual Research Project or the organisation of the Consortium Coordinator (CC) of a Collaborative Research Project).
- **Partner Institution** – in a Collaborative Research Project, an organisation participating in the project but not coordinating it (*i.e.*, the organisation of a Consortium Principal Investigator [cPI]).

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- **Letter of Intent (LOI)** – the first stage of the application process that is open to all researchers and institutions complying with the eligibility criteria (section 4).
 - **Full Proposal** – the second stage of the application process that is only open to invited applicants, selected based on the assessment of the LOIs received during the first stage.
 - **Evaluation Committee** – the committee that scores the applications received according to the established evaluation criteria and informs the Selection Board (see below). It is formed by experienced external evaluators who score the quality of the proposals. They are selected because of their career and expertise, without conflict of interest and under a commitment to confidentiality. Evaluation is overseen by an Evaluation Coordinator, an expert with acknowledged prestige who reviews and monitors the evaluation process.
 - **Selection Board** – the board formed by an odd number of members that is convened by the Pasqual Maragall Foundation to assess the alignment of received applications with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the [priorities of the PMRP](#). Selection Board members include the Foundation’s Director, external consultants to the Director, the faculty and members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Foundation’s research centre, and external experts of recognised international prestige in their field.
 - **Grant Agreement** – the agreement to be signed between the Principal Investigator of Individual Research Projects or the Consortium Coordinator of Collaborative Research Projects, the Host Institution and the Pasqual Maragall Foundation specifying each party’s rights and obligations. Consortium Principal Investigator(s) and their institution(s) accept these rights and obligations by signing an accession form to accede to the Grant Agreement.

2. Foreword

These guidelines explain the evaluation and selection procedure for the Pasqual Maragall Researchers Programme (PMRP) 2022 Call.

Application to the PMRP is via a two-stage application process: submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI) followed by the submission of a Full Proposal upon invitation. At both stages the applications will:

1. be screened for completeness and eligibility by the **PMRP Team**.
2. be reviewed by an external **Evaluation Committee**.
3. be evaluated by the **PMRP Selection Board**.

The **PMRP Team** carries out an administrative review to ensure that only fully completed proposals meeting all eligibility criteria are evaluated by the Evaluation Committee and Selection Board (see below).

The **Evaluation Committee** is formed by experts of recognised international prestige in their field. Its role is to score the applications according to the established evaluation criteria (detailed in section seven) and to inform the Selection Board of the evaluation results.

The **PMRP Selection Board** members assess, in addition to the established evaluation criteria (detailed in section seven), the alignment of received applications with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the [priorities of the PMRP](#). Selection Board members include the Foundation's Director, external consultants to the Director, the faculty and members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Foundation's research centre, and external experts of recognised international prestige in their field.



3. Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is external to the Foundation and is formed by experts of recognised international prestige in their field. Its role is to assess the applications according to the established evaluation criteria (detailed in section seven), and to inform the Selection Board of the evaluation results.

The key principles governing the activities of the Evaluation Committee are:

- **Transparency** - The evaluation process is based on clearly defined rules and procedures that are published in advance of the launch of the Call (and compiled in the present document). All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their proposals. At LOI stage, feedback will only be provided to applicants who are invited to present a Full Proposal. At full proposal stage, a detailed evaluation report will be provided to all applicants.
- **Impartiality** - The evaluation process is based exclusively on technical aspects and scientific rigour, regardless of the origin or identity of the applicants.
- **Confidentiality** - Strict confidentiality is maintained regarding any information related to the applications.

Evaluators will be selected from a vast database of external experts recognised as specialists in their subject area. Evaluators are selected based on their scientific expertise in the Call's topics and they will all have the required knowledge, professional experience and competence in the English language required to evaluate the proposals.

Evaluators and proposals are matched using the topic(s) and keywords indicated by the applicants in the application form and the specific expertise of evaluators. Evaluation is overseen by an Evaluation Coordinator with experience in evaluating proposals at an international level. The Coordinator is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the entire evaluation process.

As far as possible, a diverse Evaluation Committee in terms of gender, age, geographical location and type of institution of the employer will be sought.

A contract with each external expert is signed to address issues such as the declaration of conflicts of interest, confidentiality and the code of conduct for evaluators. Evaluators will be provided with all of the necessary information to carry out their tasks at the beginning of the evaluation process. The evaluation process is carried out remotely using an online computer application. Each evaluator only has access to the applications assigned to them.

The evaluation process is confidential and evaluators must remain anonymous. The names of the evaluators assigned to each individual proposal will not be made public.

4. Selection Board

The Selection Board members assess the alignment of received applications with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the priorities of the PMRP. Selection Board members include the Foundation's Director, external consultants to the Director, the faculty and members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Foundation's research centre, and external experts of recognised international prestige in their field.

The key principles governing the activities of the Selection Board are:

- **Transparency** - The evaluation process is based on clearly defined rules and procedures that are published in advance of the launch of the Call (and compiled in the present document).
- **Impartiality** - The evaluation process is based exclusively on technical aspects and scientific rigour, regardless of the origin or identity of the applicants.
- **Confidentiality** - Information related to the applications is only discussed with other Selection Board members and the PMRP Team
- **Objectivity** - Each application is evaluated based on the information submitted without taking into account its potential if specific changes were to be made.
- **Consistency** – The same level of judgement is applied to each application.

The PMRP Selection Board members will all have the required knowledge, professional experience and competence in the English language required to evaluate the proposals. Selection Board members will be provided with all of the necessary information to carry out their tasks throughout the evaluation process.

Selection Board members will be required to declare any potential conflict of interest in relation to any applicant or application as soon as they become aware of them. Any Selection Board member(s) with a conflict of interest will be exempt from the review, evaluation and decision-making process for the application(s) in question.

The evaluation process is confidential and evaluators must remain anonymous. The names of the evaluators assigned to each individual proposal will not be made public.

5. Letter of Intent (LOI)

All Letters of Intent are:

1. administratively reviewed for completeness and eligibility by the PMRP Team.
2. scientifically reviewed by an external Evaluation Committee.
3. evaluated by the PMRP Selection Board.

The LOIs that are evaluated most favourably will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. It is expected that the total requested budget of proposals invited to submit a Full Proposal will be around three times the available PMRP 2022 Call budget.

All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their LOI, but feedback will only be provided to applicants who are invited to present a Full Proposal.

5.1 Administrative Review

The PMRP Team carries out an administrative review to check the completeness and eligibility of all LOIs. Please note that no changes can be made to applications after the submission deadline. All incomplete and ineligible LOIs are rejected at this stage. This means that Evaluation Committee and Selection Board members can be assured that all applications they receive are eligible for evaluation. The **PMRP Team** carries out an administrative review to ensure that only fully completed proposals meeting all eligibility criteria are sent to the Evaluation Committee and Selection Board members for review.

Applicants will receive confirmation as to whether their LOI fulfils eligibility criteria and has moved forward to the scientific review stage.

The following requirements are verified:

- All of the sections of the LOI are fully completed on the online grants system.
- The **Principal Investigators (PI)** of Individual Research Projects and **Consortium Coordinators (CC)** and **Consortium Principal Investigators (cPI)** of Collaborative Research Projects are in possession of a doctoral degree (PhD).
- The **Principal Investigators (PI)** of Individual Research Projects and **Consortium Coordinators (CC)** of Collaborative Research Projects hold a **full-time position as an independent researcher at a public or non-profit research organisation based in Spain** (other than the Foundation's research centre, the BBRC).
- The **Consortium Principal Investigators (cPI)** of Collaborative Research Projects hold a **full-time position as an independent researcher at a public or non-profit research organisation** (other than the Foundation's research centre, the BBRC).
- The **Principal Investigators (PI)** of Individual Research Projects and **Consortium Coordinators (CC)** and **Consortium Principal Investigators (cPI)** of Collaborative Research Projects are principal investigator on at least one active, competitive research grant. Mentored awards and training grants, *i.e.*, projects including the role of a mentor or supervisor, do not qualify.
- The **Principal Investigators (PI)**, **Consortium Coordinators (CC)** and **Consortium Principal Investigators (cPI)** only participate in one research project.

- In the case of Collaborative Research Projects, each Research Team is from a different institution.
- A maximum of €800,000 has been requested.

In addition, if a researcher has requested for the period of evaluation of their track record to be extended beyond five years, the PMRP Team checks the supporting documentation before approving or rejecting the request.

5.2 Evaluation Committee

The PMRP Team makes available to the external Evaluation Committee all fully completed, eligible LOIs.

Each LOI will be evaluated by three evaluators chosen from the pool of experts who form part of the Evaluation Committee. Evaluation Committee members are all experts of recognised international prestige in their field and are selected based on the topic(s) and the keywords provided by the applicants. This evaluation process will be managed externally and is overseen by an appointed Evaluation Coordinator, an individual chosen for their experience in evaluating proposals at an international level.

As far as possible, each external expert will evaluate a minimum of three and a maximum of ten LOIs. This ensures that no evaluator is overburdened but at the same time that they receive a sufficient number of LOIs to allow them to carry out a more objective and comparative evaluation.

5.3 Selection Board

The PMRP Team provides the Selection Board with all fully completed, eligible LOIs as well as the scores awarded by the Evaluation Committee. A board meeting is scheduled to assess the alignment of each application with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the [priorities of the PMRP](#), as well as its suitability for inclusion in the Foundation's portfolio. Following this assessment, the final ranking of the received LOIs is confirmed.

6. Full Proposal

All Full Proposals are:

1. administratively reviewed for completeness and eligibility by the PMRP Team.
2. scientifically reviewed by an external Evaluation Committee.
3. evaluated by the Pasqual Maragall Researchers Programme (PMRP) Selection Board.

The Full Proposals evaluated most favourably will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement with the Pasqual Maragall Foundation. Prior to the signature of each Grant Agreement, the Host Institution will be required to provide additional documentation, for example to demonstrate that it is up-to-date with its tax and social security obligations.

In the unlikely event that a selected PI/CC waives the grant, the Pasqual Maragall Foundation reserves the right to contact the next highest scoring applicant.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their Full Proposal and receive a full evaluation report.

6.1 Administrative Review

The PMRP Team carries out an administrative review to check the completeness and eligibility of all Full Proposals. Please note that no changes can be made to applications after the submission deadline. All incomplete and ineligible Full Proposals are rejected at this stage. This means that Evaluation Committee and Selection Board members can be assured that all applications they receive are eligible for evaluation.

Applicants will receive confirmation as to whether their Full Proposal fulfils eligibility criteria and is moving forward to the scientific review stage.

In addition to the requirements verified at LOI stage, the following checks are carried out:

- All of the online sections of the Full Proposal are fully completed.
- The Full Proposal uploaded in PDF contains all of the requested information and does not exceed the specified limits.
- A maximum of €800,000 has been requested.
- In the case of Collaborative Research Projects, a maximum of 30% of the budget is assigned to Partner Institutions outside Spain.
- A maximum of 20% of the total direct costs budget is allocated to the salary of the Principal Investigator/Consortium Coordinator/Consortium Principal Investigators.
- Equipment is purchased during the first 40% of the project duration (for example, during the first two years of a five-year project).
- The flat-rate contribution towards overheads is a maximum of 21% of the total direct costs.

6.2 Evaluation Committee

The PMRP Team makes available to the external Evaluation Committee all fully completed, eligible Full Proposals. They will be downloaded from the online application system and provided in PDF.

At least two external experts are selected to evaluate each Full Proposal. In the case of divergent evaluations (difference of 15% or more between the final scores), a third expert may be asked to evaluate the proposal.

As far as possible, each external expert will evaluate a minimum of three Full Proposals. Depending on the final number of applications at this stage, each evaluator may be asked to evaluate all of the Full Proposals. This would be the ideal situation to guarantee the most objective and comparative evaluation possible.

6.3 Selection Board

The PMRP Team makes available to the Selection Board all fully completed, eligible Full Proposals. A board meeting is scheduled to assess the alignment of each application with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the [priorities of the PMRP](#), as well as its suitability for inclusion in the Foundation's portfolio.

If deemed necessary, the Selection Board may invite Principal Investigators (Individual Research Projects) or Consortium Coordinators (Collaborative Research Projects) to attend a meeting to present their proposed research projects.

Following the Selection Board's assessment, the final ranking of the Full Proposals is confirmed. The highest-ranking Full Proposals will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement with the Pasqual Maragall Foundation. At this stage a full evaluation report will be provided to all applicants.

7. Evaluation Criteria

A score from one to ten is awarded for each evaluation criteria.

The scoring scale used for both stages of the PMRP 2022 Call is the following:

Score	Description
1	Poor
2	Marginal
3	Weak
4	Fair
5	Satisfactory
6	Good
7	Very Good
8	Excellent
9	Outstanding
10	Exceptional

7.1 Letter of Intent (LOI)

Evaluation Committee members will award the Letters of Intent (LOI) a score for each of the following evaluation criteria:

PI/CC/cPIs Track Record (40%)

- Ability to successfully execute the project based on demonstrable scientific expertise
- Demonstrable independency to lead research projects and teams (awarded and executed research grants, mentorship of researchers...).
- Relevance of contributions in the last five years to the area of research proposed (*e.g.*, publications, presentations in conferences, technology transfer...). The five-year period may be extended in certain circumstances as specified in section 7.3.

Scientific Excellence (30%)

- Degree of novelty of the research project proposed.
- Quality of the research project proposed.
- Clarity of the hypothesis and objectives.
- Potential of the project to generate highly relevant results.
- Extent to which the proposal is ambitious yet realistic.

Impact (30%)

- Scientific impact of the project in terms of its potential contribution to advancement of the research field.
- Potential impact on society as a whole.

Selection Board members will review the LOI and in addition to the criteria above, they will assess them according to the following criterion:

Alignment with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the priorities of the PMRP (10%)

- Extent to which the proposal addresses the challenges of Alzheimer's or other age-related neurodegenerative diseases by providing new, non-conventional scientific solutions to create relevant results.
- Degree of demonstration of credibility in terms of scientific rigor and expert knowledge.
- Suitability for inclusion in the PMF portfolio - synergy with the Foundation's intramural projects ([Current Research & Studies on Alzheimer's disease | BBRC \(barcelonabeta.org\)](#))

The final score for each criterion is the average of the scores awarded by the different evaluators. The scores are then weighted according to the percentage assigned to each criterion to provide a total score rounded to two decimal places for each LOI.

The LOIs evaluated most favourably will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. All applicants will be informed about the outcome of their LOI but feedback will only be provided to applicants invited to submit a Full Proposal.

7.2 Full Proposal

Evaluation Committee members will award the Full Proposals a score for each of the following evaluation criteria:

Research Team(s) (20%)

- Capacity of the Research Team(s) to ensure project implementation (*e.g.*, level of experience, complementary expertise, sufficient Research Team members).
- In the case of Individual Research Projects, clear evidence that a Partner Institution is not required to undertake the research project.
- In the case of Collaborative Research Projects, the added value of the Consortium (successful previous research collaboration between the Consortium Coordinator and the Consortium Principal Investigator(s), complementary expertise).

Scientific Excellence (25%)

- Degree of novelty of the research project proposed.
- Quality of the research project proposed.
- Clarity of the hypothesis and objectives.
- Potential of the project to generate highly relevant results.
- Extent to which the proposal is ambitious yet realistic.

Implementation (25%)

- Quality of the work plan including logical structure, feasibility of the timescales proposed and the inclusion of quantifiable information to allow for progress to be monitored.

- In the case of Collaborative Research Projects, clearly defined roles for all Consortium members that are realistic given their experience.
- Access to sufficient infrastructure and resources to carry out the project in the organisation(s).
- Clear justification of the funding requested to execute the proposed research project and its distribution during the life of the project, taking into account resources already available.
- Identification of critical risks and quality of the contingency plan to be executed
- Well addressed ethical issues.

Impact (30%)

- Scientific impact of the project in terms of its potential contribution to advancement in the research field.
- Potential impact on the health of society as a whole.
- Quality of the communication, dissemination, exploitation, and data sharing plans and their suitability for the research project proposed.
- Extent to which the expected impact can be quantified and is credible.
- If applicable, clarity of the intellectual property strategy.

Selection Board members will review the Full Proposals and in addition to the criteria above, they will also assess the application according to the following evaluation criterion:

Alignment with the [strategic plan of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation](#) and the [priorities of the PMRP](#)

- Extent to which the proposal addresses the challenges of Alzheimer's or other age-related neurodegenerative diseases by providing new, non-conventional scientific solutions to create relevant results.
- Degree of demonstration of credibility in terms of scientific rigor and expert knowledge.
- Suitability for inclusion in the PMF portfolio - synergy with the [Foundation's intramural projects](#).
- Ability to strengthen the mission of the Foundation in Spain through the proposed communication and dissemination activities.

The final score for each criterion is the average of the scores awarded by the different evaluators. The scores are then weighted according to the percentage assigned to each criterion to provide a total score rounded to two decimal places for each Full Proposal.

The Full Proposals evaluated most favourably will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement with the Pasqual Maragall Foundation. Prior to the signature of each Grant Agreement, the Host Institution will be required to provide additional documentation, for example to demonstrate that it is up-to-date with its tax and social security obligations.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their Full Proposal and at this stage a full evaluation report will be provided.

If a selected PI/CC waives the grant, the Pasqual Maragall Foundation may contact the next highest scoring applicant.

In the unlikely event that proposals are not deemed by the external evaluators or selection board members to be of sufficient quality, the Foundation reserves the right to not award grants on this occasion.

7.3 Extension to Track Record Evaluation Period

Please note that in the following circumstances a researcher can request for the period of evaluation of their track record to be extended beyond five years:

- Maternity - track record evaluation period extended by 18 months per child born in the five years prior to the Call deadline. If the leave taken was longer than 18 months, the extension will be for the actual duration of time taken as leave. The same applies for child adoption.
- Paternity leave - track record evaluation period extended by the actual duration of time taken as paternity leave during the five years prior to the Call deadline. The same applies for child adoption.
- Long-term (over 90 days) illness - track record evaluation period extended by the actual period of sick leave taken or by the actual period of compassionate leave taken to care for a seriously ill close family member during the five years prior to the Call deadline.
- Other exceptional circumstances - considered on a case-by-case basis. If you think your circumstances may warrant an extension of the track record evaluation period, please contact the office at researchgrants@fpmaragall.org for advice before applying.

The PMRP Team checks the requests during the administrative review by verifying the supporting documentation provided. If applicable, evaluators will be notified of the extended period of track record to be evaluated.

Detailed information on the documentation to be submitted to support each request can be found in the PMRP 2022 Call Submission Guidelines.