

Instructions for preparing application and realization of stipend in the

START 2025

programme of the Foundation for Polish Science



On the photo: Scholarship holders of the START FNP programme/ FNP archive

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1. WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE STIPEND

STATUS OF CANDIDATES

A START stipend may be applied for by PhD students at Polish scientific institutions and persons (including PhDs) conducting R&D work (scientific research or development work) in Poland at scientific institutions (e.g. in research institutes, companies or foundations) which have the conduct of scientific research and/or development work as one of their statutory purposes.

R&D WORK (research and development) is systematically conducted creative work undertaken with the aim of increasing the resources of knowledge, including knowledge of mankind, culture and society, as well as with the aim of finding new applications for such knowledge. R&D covers three types of work:

- Basic research – theoretical and experimental work generally not aimed at obtaining specific applications
- Applied research – research work undertaken with the aim of obtaining new knowledge with specific applications
- Experimental development – work consisting of applying existing knowledge to development of new products, services and processes, or significant improvement of existing ones.

NOTE: The Foundation does not require that the candidate hold an employment contract for an unlimited period – other forms of employment under which the candidate conducts scientific research are also acceptable: a contract for a specific work (*umowa o dzieło*), a contract of mandate (*umowa zlecenia*), participation in a research project, part-time employment, etc. The basis for paying out the stipend is a trilateral agreement among the Foundation, the stipendee, and the Polish educational institution or institution in which the stipendee conducts scientific research or development work.

CANDIDATES' SCIENTIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Only persons with scientific accomplishments documented by publications, patents or conference papers may take part in the competition for a START stipend. Patent applications should not be included in the list of scientific accomplishments, but may be presented in the description of scientific achievements.

CHANGE IN LOCATION OF RESEARCH OR DOCTORATE DURING THE COURSE OF THE COMPETITION

If during the course of the competition the candidate changes the location where he or she is conducting R&D work or the location where he or she is pursuing a doctorate, the stipend agreement— if the candidate wins a stipend—may be signed with another Polish scientific institution where the candidate will continue research work or doctoral studies.

AGE OF CANDIDATES

The calendar year is used to determine candidates' age. The date of the candidate's birthday within the given calendar year is irrelevant. The age limit of 30 means that candidates born in 1994 or later qualify for the 2025 competition.

The age limit of 30 may be extended:

- By a maximum of 2 years for interruptions in research work, if the interruptions last a total of no less than 12 months if seeking an extension of one year, or no less than 24 months if seeking an extension of two years. The extended age limit of 32 means that candidates born in 1992 or later can participate in the competition.

NOTE: Documented interruptions in research work include for example unpaid leave, if the candidate did not conduct research work during that period, leave connected with parenting, leave caused by sickness, work in the R&D sector without participation in scientific research, work in other sectors of the economy, etc.

- For giving birth to a child (for female candidates) or for adoption of a child (for all candidates regardless of sex), by one year for each child, regardless of the date of birth or adoption of the child.

NOTE: The grounds for extension set forth above cannot be combined. An age extension can be obtained only on the basis of one of them i.e. for a interruptions in research work or for birth/adoption of a child.

Documents confirming that the candidate is entitled to an age extension should not be enclosed with the application, but the Foundation may request submission of such documents at any stage of the competition.

2. REGISTRATION AND FILING OF APPLICATION

HOW TO REGISTER

Registration of candidates applying for a START stipend is conducted online via electronic system (database) made available by the Foundation at <https://wnioski.fnp.org.pl>

ATTENTION: The candidate's login should contain the last name.

The application in the START program consists of the application form and attachments.

Before beginning registration please review carefully the *Rules for Award of Stipends in the START Programme* and following Instructions.

BEFORE YOU START TO FILE YOUR APPLICATION

Before you begin to complete the online application form, you should:

- Prepare all attachments required by the competition rules in electronic form (pdf format). The names for the attachments should follow the naming scheme provided in the instructions under **TECHNICAL GUIDELINES**).
- Determine who in your case will act as the applicant's representative (in the case of universities this should be the rector or vice-rector, and in the case of other institutions, the

director or authorized representative). The online application should provide the name, position, and academic degree/title of the person acting as the applicant.

NOTE: After final closing of the application (after clicking “close application”) there is no possibility to change the data concerning the applicant’s representative.

STAGES OF FILING APPLICATION

1. Filling in the on-line application form (tab: "Basic information") available in the database at <http://wnioski.fnp.org.pl>;
2. Attaching in electronic form the attachments listed in the *Rules for Award of Stipends in the START Programme* and these Instructions.
3. Closing the completed online application data edition;
4. Downloading and printing out the PDF application form;
5. Signing the application form by the candidate and the applicant;
6. Scanning the signed and stamped application form only (without attachments) and uploading the scan to the database by sending it to the FNP server as a single PDF file;
7. Submitting the electronic version of the application not later than on the **31st of October 2024**, which is going to be confirmed by e-mail;
8. Delivering the printed version of application by post (or by hand) to the Foundation’s office at **I. Krasickiego 20/22 str., 02-611 Warsaw, on or before the the 31st of October 2024**. Receipt of the application will be decided by the date of the postmark.

ATTENTION: The electronic submission of a properly signed application form and sending it in printed form to the Foundation's address within the required deadline decides about the acceptance of the application for the competition. The printed application should contain the form application with the seal (if hand-signed) and original signatures of the applicant’s representative and the candidate. All the attachments should be submitted in electronic form only.

3. COMMENTS CONCERNING PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

NOTES CONCERNING THE APPLICATION

The application form is generated automatically by the wnioski.fnp.org.pl system after completing the data in the "Principal information" tab and uploading the required attachments in the "Attachments" tab. The application form (without attachments) must be printed and signed with appropriate signatures. A digital version of the signed application should be uploaded to the system, and the paper version should be sent or delivered to the Foundation's headquarters (also in the case of applications signed electronically). More information in the chapter: FINAL CLOSING AND SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

BEGINNING COMPLETION OF THE ONLINE APPLICATION – PRINCIPAL INFORMATION

The online form may be filled in after activation of the “Edit” button.

NOTE: You should not use ALL CAPS. First names, last names and proper nouns should be capitalized. Be sure not to enter your first name in the field for last names. Use abbreviations for academic titles and degrees such as Dr (Polish examples: mgr, mgr inż., dr, dr inż., lek., dr n. med. etc).

MODIFICATION OF DATA ONLINE

The application may be modified or supplemented (including after logging off and logging back into the system again) up until the point of final closing of the online application by the candidate.

CANDIDATE’S CONTACT DETAILS

In the designated place in the application form, the candidate should provide preferably at least two possible contact telephone numbers (mobile, work or home). Addresses should be current, accurate, and contain the postal code, and in the case of the addresses of institutions, their full names. In filling in the correspondence address, the candidate should choose between a work address and a home address. If the candidate uses a work address, the full name of the institution and unit (university and department) should be repeated in order to receive correspondence. A work address that does not provide the name of the unit is incomplete.

NAME OF CANDIDATE’S INSTITUTION

The candidate should select the name of the **institution** and **unit** using the menu included in the application form. If the candidate’s institution/unit is not included in the menu, it should be entered in the text fields below the menu. **Please do not select the field “other unit”**, but in the field below the list of institutions enter the specific name of the unit. In the case of institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), **please do not select PAN Division**, but enter the full name of the institute in the text field.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE FIELD OF THE CANDIDATE’S RESEARCH

The keywords describing the candidate refer to the field of research/scientific discipline which the candidate is involved in.

LIST OF UP TO FIVE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS (WITHOUT DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK INPUT)

In the "List of maximum five publications (without description of work contribution)" field, enter the same publications that are included in the "List" attachment. However, please omit the description of your own contribution. We prefer APA style writing. Below are examples of such notation:

Journal article:

Sirname, X., Sirname2, X. Y., Sirname3, Z. (year). Title of the article. Name of the Journal, value(issue), beginning page–end page.

Kowalski, M., Nowak, P. (2009). Narzędzia komunikacji w XXI wieku, *Studia socjologiczne* 1(3), s. 19-43.

Book:

Sirname, X., Sirname, X. Y. (year). Title of the book. Place of Publishing: Publishing house.

Kowalski, M., Nowak, P. (2009) Narzędzia komunikacji w XXI wieku. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Chapter in a book:

Sirname, X. (year). Title of the chapter. In: Y. Sirname, B. Sirname (red.), Title of yhe book (p. beginning page—end page). Place of publishing: Publishing house.

Kowal M., Walczak P. (2009) Narzędzia komunikacji w XXI wieku. In: A. Kowalski, (eds.), ABC komunikacji (p. 120-156). Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

OUTGOING STIPEND

Candidates for the START stipend may, but do not have to, apply for a outgoing stipend. Please complete the "Outgoing stipend" tab only if you are applying for such a scholarship.

SELECTION OF REVIEW GROUP

Applications in the START competition are evaluated within review groups. The reviewers receive a package of applications related by field (i.e. assigned to the same review group), evaluate each of them, and then compare the applications. The candidate's own choice of the review group is intended to enable the best possible choice of the review group for the candidate's application. Some fields are assigned to more than one review group. In that case, the candidate selects one group—the one that in his or her view best corresponds to the specifics of the research (in making a choice, the other fields included in the same group should be considered). At the panel's request and with the candidate's knowledge, the Foundation may change the review group for the candidate's application, if it determines that the change would be advantageous to the candidate. Interdisciplinary research that do not fit into one review group may be reviewed in two groups. The interdisciplinary nature of the application should be described in the description of the scientific achievement and a request for evaluation in two groups should be submitted by e-mail to the program coordinator.

The list of review groups and the fields assigned to them is available on the Foundation's website in a separate file.

DECLARATIONS FOR APPLICATION

The printed version of the application form for the START programme also includes declarations by the Candidate and the Applicant which are printed out automatically along with the application form. The complete patterns for the content of the declarations for the Candidate and the Applicant are found in the *Documents for download* section of the online form.

In the case of the **Candidate** the declarations concern among other things:

- Declaration on fulfilment of the formal conditions for candidates in the competition
- Declaration on review of the rules for the competition and compliance with the rules
- Consent to processing of personal data by the Foundation for Polish Science
- Consent to provide access to the application to experts and reviewers conducting evaluations in the competition

- Consent to providing information for the purposes of evaluations conducted by the Foundation for Polish Science or other authorized entities, regardless of the result of the competition
- In the case of candidates exceeding age 30 in the year of filing of the application, a declaration confirming interruptions in scientific work or a declaration concerning birth or adoption of a child
- Consequences of filing false data or declarations.

In the case of the **Applicant** the declarations concern among other things:

- Declaration on review of the rules for the competition and compliance with the rules
- Consent to processing of personal data by the Foundation for Polish Science
- Consent to provide access to the application to experts and reviewers conducting evaluations in the competition
- Consent to providing information for the purposes of evaluations conducted by the Foundation for Polish Science or other authorized entities, regardless of the result of the competition
- Applicant's declaration that if a Stipend is received the entity will seek all approvals from the ethics commission or other permits required by law necessary for conducting the research in question and that research will not begin until the relevant approvals and permits are obtained.

In the case of the **Scientific supervisor** the declarations concern among other things:

- Declaration on review of the rules for the competition and compliance with the rules
- Declaration of detailed examination of the application for a START stipend, and in particular the list presenting the candidate's accomplishments and the description of the research achievement
- Consent to processing of personal data by the Foundation for Polish Science
- Consequences of filing false data or declarations.

NOTE: The declaration by the Scientific Supervisor (the complete content of the declaration is available in the Documents for download section of the online form) is one of the attachments to the online application and has to be submitted only electronically in the attachments section of the online form.

REMARKS CONCERNING ATTACHMENTS TO APPLICATION

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

All attachments to the application should be prepared in PDF format and enclosed to the application form electronically only. Polish characters should not be used in the names of files enclosed with the electronic application. Attachments should be uploaded to the wnioski.fnp.org.pl system in the "Attachments" tab.

Attachments requiring a signature can be signed by hand and scanned, or signed with a qualified electronic signature. You should not paste photos of signatures into digital documents.

Following documents has to be attached to the online application (in electronic version only):

1. Curriculum Vitae

File name format: **Surname.CV** (in file names, surname without Polish characters)

The CV should not exceed 3 pages. The CV should contain in order:

- Personal details and address/contact details
- Course of education
- Professional experience (locations where the candidate has conducted scientific research)
- Most important foreign internships (place, dates, duration)
- Candidate's most important research projects (title, name of programme, awarding institution)
- Up to 5 most important scientific conferences with information of the manner in which the candidate appeared at the conference
- Most important awards and distinctions received by the candidate.

2. List of publications – scientific accomplishments

File name format: **Surname.list**

The list should contain a maximum of up to five original publications of international or nationwide reach which the candidate regards as the most important of his or her scientific accomplishments. The texts of a maximum of three of these publications, patents or conference papers, in whole or in part (depending on size), should be enclosed with the electronic version of the application. If the most important original publications of the candidate include collective works, i.e. those with more than one author, in each instance the candidate's contribution to the work should be indicated in the form of a description (1–2 sentences) of what the candidate's contribution consisted of. If the candidate is the corresponding author, this should be indicated in the list of publications. Do not give a percentage contribution to the collective works.

NOTE 1: The list of scientific accomplishments CANNOT include patent applications, only patents. Information about patent applications may be included in the description of the research achievement.

NOTE 2: The list of publications must be signed by the candidate's scientific supervisor.

NOTE 3: The quality, not the quantity, of publications is assessed, so please limit yourself to presenting the 5 best publications in the appropriate attachment and do not include a list of all your publications in other attachments.

The lists of winners of the START programme published on the Foundation's website contain lists of publications by the winners of the competitions, which can help candidates assess their own scientific accomplishments. The Foundation encourages candidates to review the lists of publications by previous winners in their field to compare their own scientific accomplishments with those of previous winners in the programme and determine what chance they may have in the competition.

Works accepted for publication may be included in the list of scientific accomplishments only if a document from the publisher is enclosed confirming acceptance of the work for publication. Confirmations of acceptance of a work for publication **may be signed in any form** and transmitted to the candidate by traditional post or email (it must be clear from the statement that the work has been

accepted and will be published). If the publication is already available in an electronic version and has a DOI number, it may be regarded as published.

Confirmations of acceptance for publication should be scanned into one or two files. File name format: **Surname.acceptance_for_publication** or **Surname.acceptances_for_publication**

It is **not** recommended for candidates to provide an Impact Factor and ministerial points, because **it is not a criterion for evaluation of the candidates' scientific accomplishments**.

3. Texts of publications

File name format: **Surname.publication1**, **Surname.publication2**, etc.

The texts of a maximum of 3 works chosen by the candidate as his or her most important achievements should be enclosed with the electronic version of the application. They may include works in the process of publication, if confirmation of acceptance for publication is attached. The maximum size of files is 20 MB. In the case of lengthy publications, or books, please submit only the table of contents, introduction and conclusion, or those passages on the basis of which the reviewers can evaluate the importance of the publication.

NOTE: After attaching the attachments to the form, it should be checked whether the files with publications open correctly and are not encrypted or corrupted.

NOTE 2: Publications attached to the application must be listed in the List of Publications.

4. Description of originality of research achievement(s)

File name format: **Surname.achievement**

The description of the originality of the research achievement(s) should be prepared with respect to the list of most important publications of the candidate. The entire description should not exceed 2 pages.

When describing a research achievement, it is worth answering the following questions: What did I research or discover? Why is my discovery important? What's innovative about it? What significance can it have for the field of science pursued? Can the discovery have applications outside science?

This description is fundamental for evaluation of the application, because the reviewers place particular weight on the **substantive** importance of the candidate's research achievement(s). Therefore candidates should pay particularly attention to a precise description reflecting the substantive and cognitive value of their research. In the description it is recommended to refer directly to the specific publications of the candidate however it should be noted that the description of the most important research achievement is not the same as the separate description of the individual publications of the candidate. You should NOT include a list of all your publications in the description.

NOTE 1: It is not a research achievement to, for example, receive a grant, award or stipend, or to receive an invitation and deliver a paper at an important scientific conference. However, the results of the candidate's own research, which might be the subject of a grant project or a paper at a conference, or might be published, are a research achievement. Similarly, obtaining a doctorate is not a research achievement; rather, the research achievement is the innovativeness and the substance of the discovery or results presented in the doctoral dissertation.

In the case of the humanities and social sciences, an achievement could be a creative work published in a significant scholarly journal, particularly a foreign one, or an important publication in book form. However, the substantive value and originality of the work should be demonstrated in the description.

NOTE 2: Please describe your research achievement **in the first person**, that is, as you would describe YOUR OWN research, not research by another person.

NOTE 3: Candidates who believe that the research they have conducted stands out for boldly crossing borders between different fields of science, opening up new research perspectives, and creating new values in science may address this issue in the description of their most important research achievement, also indicating which of the publications or parts thereof involve research of this nature. In that case, the candidates should also:

- Expressly indicate what this interdisciplinary nature of the work consists of, what it derives from and what is the added value of this type of R&D work
- Specify which additional review groups should—in their opinion—review the application (see also [Selection of review group](#)).

Whether the given application can accurately be regarded as crossing borders between different fields of science, opening up new research perspectives and creating new values in science will be decided by the panel of experts. The Foundation will make all efforts to ensure that all applications deemed by the panel of experts to be interdisciplinary in the foregoing sense and qualified for further stages of the competition are evaluated during subsequent stages by an appropriately selected group of reviewers representing different areas and fields of science specific to the given application, also as indicated by the candidate.

Applications regarded as interdisciplinary may be considered in the **competition for the Prof. Barbara Skarga Honorary Fellowship**, awarded each year to one of the winners of the START programme.

5. Opinion of scientific supervisor

File name format: [Surname.opinion](#)

Opinion of the candidate's scientific supervisor or director of the research team in which the candidate conducts research. The opinion electronic version must contain the scientific supervisor's signature. The scientific supervisor must be the candidate's immediate supervisor or the director of the candidate's research team (in the case of PhDs), or in the case of PhD students, the academic adviser (*promotor*).

6. Declaration of scientific supervisor

File name format: [Surname.supervisor_declaration](#)

A form for the declaration is enclosed in the documents for download. After signing, a scan should be enclosed.

7. Description of scientific plans for upcoming year

File name format: [Surname.plans](#)

The description of scientific plans concerns calendar year 2025 and may include information about plans arising out of realization of a research grant obtained from an institution funding scientific

research other than the Foundation (such as the National Science Centre or the National Centre for Research and Development). The description should not exceed 2 pages.

8. Documents connected with seeking an Outgoing Stipend (optional)

Format for file names: **Surname.outgoing_program, Surname.outgoing_institution, Surname.outgoing_invitation** (See also **Remarks concerning Outgoing Stipends as part of the START stipend**).

9. Declaration on change of name

File name format: **Surname.change**

A form for this declaration is included in the files for downloading. It should be filled out, signed, and attached as a scan (applies only to persons who have changed their name and have scientific accomplishments under their previous name).

OTHER ATTACHMENTS

Other attachments not listed above, such as multiple opinions, letters of recommendation, testimonials etc., should not be attached to the application.

REMARKS CONCERNING OUTGOING STIPENDS AS PART OF THE START STIPEND

SEEKING AN OUTGOING STIPEND

It is not mandatory to seek an Outgoing Stipend. An Outgoing Stipend can be received only by winners of the START competition. The application for an Outgoing Stipend must be completed and filed together with the application for the START Stipend. However, it is independent of the START stipend amount and is paid out additionally. The amount is determined individually, depending on the location and duration of the visit. The amount awarded is paid out by the Foundation to the stipendee's account provided in the stipend agreement.

For the application for an Outgoing Stipend to be considered, the necessary information must be provided in the registration form for the START stipend, and the relevant documents must be attached under the "Attachments" tab. If these documents are lacking, the application for an Outgoing Stipend will not be considered. The list of documents required for consideration of the application is set forth below.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF INSTITUTION

The attachment containing a justification for the choice of institution together with brief information about the nature of the programme for the planned visit should not exceed 2 pages.

HOST SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION/PERSON

Information about the foreign institution the candidate plans to visit should contain the full name of the institution and its exact address, as well as the address of its website. The name, place of employment, position and scientific accomplishment of the person inviting the candidate (based on the person's scientific CV) should be included. The attachment should not exceed 2 pages.

LETTER OF INVITATION

The letter inviting the candidate to visit should include an invitation or confirmation of acceptance of the candidate for a scientific visit at the foreign institution. Letters of invitation may be prepared in any form and transmitted to the candidate in a hard copy or electronic form. We do not specify the formal version of the letter of invitation.

CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF OUTGOING STIPENDS

The main criterion for award of an Outgoing Stipend is the substantive justification for the planned visit. The scientific standing of the institution and the scientific potential of its personnel are also important, and particularly the originality of the scientific accomplishments of the person inviting the stipendee.

Please note that the aim of the Outgoing Stipends is to get to know NEW research centres and establish NEW cooperation with the research staff at those centres. It is not FNP's intention to support visits to centres where the candidate has already stayed or at the request of persons with whom there is existing cooperation or joint projects are already being conducted, and in particular jointly published works. FNP's intention is for research visits under the START programme to help further the stipendees' careers.

Stipendees, who are often currently at a crucial stage in their scientific development, may take advantage of study trips for example to form new research partnerships, or establish mentoring relationships with the person indicated in the application. The visit to a particular centre may also serve as verification or preparation for a longer visit in the nature of a doctoral fellowship. Most importantly, the aim and assumptions of the study visit should arise directly from the individual needs of the stipendee, and not for example the needs of the team in which the stipendee is currently working, or a product of an existing relationship with the given centre (via a superior or academic adviser). In this respect, the Foundation encourages stipendees to take independent action and consciously shape their growth as researchers. Consultations with their mentors may prove particularly helpful in this respect.

REPORT ON OUTGOING STIPENDS

Within two months after realization of the Outgoing Stipend, the stipendee is required to submit a report to the Foundation (according to the form provided), together with a confirmation of the visit from the foreign institution. Financial settlements are not required.

FINAL CLOSING OF ONLINE APPLICATION

To close the application, select "Verification and application submission" tab. The final closing of the application means that the data editing has been completed and correctly verified, and the application form has been signed, sealed (seal I required for hand-signed documents) and uploaded to wnioski.fnp.org.pl.

It should also be borne in mind that after the candidate closes the application, the data included in the application will be accessible as read-only, without the possibility of making further changes. If the account is blocked, you should contact the programme coordinator.

Successful submission of an application to the competition consists in submitting the correct application in electronic version and sending or delivering printed version of the application form to the Foundation's address by **31st of October 2024**.

The printed application should contain the form of application with the seal (if hand-signed) and original signatures of the applicant's representative and the candidate. We do not accept scans of handwritten signatures on the application form.

WHO SIGNS AND STAMPS THE APPLICATION

The hard copy of the stipend application must be signed by:

1. The candidate
2. The applicant's representative (i.e. the rector or prorector of the university, or in the case of another entity its director or authorized representative).

The hand-signed application should bear the individual named seal of the person representing the applicant – the rector (or prorector) in the case of a university, or in the case of another scientific institution, the director of person authorized to represent the institution externally

3. Digitally-signed (with qualified electronic signatures) applications do not require seals.

NOTE: Applications from candidates without the aforementioned signatures and seal will not be accepted. Applications do not need to be initialled on every page.

USE OF QUALIFIED ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES

Qualified electronic signatures are equivalent to handwritten signatures and does not require the seal. Digitally signed applications should be submitted both in digital form and in the form of a printout sent or delivered to the Foundation's headquarters. You cannot combine digital and handwritten signatures on one document.

TIME AND PLACE FOR FILING HARD COPY OF APPLICATION

Applications for the START programme competition (2025 edition) should be submitted in hard copy by post or in person at the Foundation's offices: **I. Krasickiego 20/22 str., 02-611 Warsaw, on or before the 31st of October 2024**. The date of filing of the application will be determined by the postmark.

CONFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION BY FNP

Due to the large number of applications in the competition, the Foundation will not send candidates confirmation of receipt of the hard copy of the application. To obtain such confirmation, the application should be submitted by registered mail, return receipt requested.

4. STAGES AND CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

STAGES OF EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

1. Stage I: formal evaluation of applications

The formal evaluation is made by the Foundation employees. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements—not signed by the applicants or sent after the deadline—will not be considered. The formal defects listed above cannot be made up. Otherwise, candidates whose applications require supplementation will be notified accordingly by the programme coordinator. Those applications can be supplemented within 7 days after receipt of the relevant notice.

If an electronic file attached to the online form is found to be damaged, or in the case of typographical errors, the programme coordinator may request supplementation at any stage in the competition.

2. Stage II: evaluation of applications by experts

Every application is evaluated by at least two experts. Experts receive applications from specific review groups (see also: [Selection of review group](#)) representing the same field of science. The experts will assign each application to one of the three groups listed below (depending on the quality and originality of the candidates' scientific accomplishments and the importance of their achievements):

Group A – highest recommendation for the next stage of evaluation: the best applications, submitted by outstanding and distinguished candidates, with original and innovative scientific accomplishments of international scope as well as significant research achievements.

Group B – conditional recommendation for the next stage of evaluation: applications of candidates with good scientific accomplishments and research achievements, but less significant than the best candidates.

Group C – no recommendation for the next stage of evaluation: applications of candidates whose scientific research is at a beginning level. These are candidates who cannot demonstrate significant scientific accomplishments; the results of their work are of local reach; their publications are predominantly brief post-conference reports or works of a popular science nature.

The results of evaluations by experts undergo discussion and consultation at panel meetings of experts in specific fields of science. Panel participants can compare the level of the assessed applications. The applications found by the panel of experts to be the best are qualified for the third stage of the competition. The rest of the applications do not participate in the subsequent stages of the competition.

3. Stage III: evaluation of applications by reviewers

Applications qualified for the third stage of the competition are evaluated within specific review groups. Each group is evaluated by at least three reviewers.

The task of the reviewers is to rank the application, in order from the best to the weakest and to justify the assessment indicating the originality of the scientific achievements, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

The reviewers' assessments are composed of:

- A. A grade on a 7 point scale (the best applications according to the merit criteria receive 7 points, the weakest – 1 point)
- B. a rank, being a result of the ranking of all the applications from the best to the weakest one.

The reviewers also provide opinions on Outgoing Stipends for candidates applying for them (see [Remarks concerning Outgoing Stipends as part of the START stipend](#)).

4. Stage IV: selection of competition winners

The final selection of winners is made by the Foundation Board on the basis of a detailed analysis of all evaluations of candidates and applications. The Board's decision is confirmed by the Foundation Council.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

START stipends are awarded in recognition of the scientific accomplishments to date of young researchers. The purpose of these stipends is to encourage the most outstanding scientists at the beginning of their research careers to pursue further growth in the field of science.

QUALITY AND ORIGINALITY OF SCIENTIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Under the rules for the START programme, the basic criterion for evaluation of applications is the scientific quality and originality of candidates' accomplishments. This is evaluated by reviewers in particular on the basis of:

- The list of up to five publications, patents or conference papers enclosed with the online application
- Copies of up to three of the foregoing publications, patents or conference papers enclosed with the online application which the candidate regards as his or her most important research work to date
- The description of the originality of the candidate's most important research achievement(s) enclosed with the online application.

The reviewers consider only substantive value—the originality and innovativeness of the scientific achievement. Even a single work, representing a serious contribution to research in the candidate's field, may be sufficient to receive a stipend. Thus when evaluating candidates' achievements, reviewers pay particular attention to whether the works they present are original and contribute new ideas, methods and the like to their scientific discipline.

In the case of post-conference works, the reviewers assess whether they are innovative works prepared at the request of the organizers, or rather brief items in the nature of summaries or reports. In the case of evaluation of collective works, on the basis of information provided by the candidates the reviewers consider how the candidate's individual work contributed to the publication.

The quality, not the quantity, of publications is assessed, so please limit yourself to presenting the 5 best publications in the appropriate attachment and do not include a list of all your publications in other attachments.

CANDIDATE'S MOST IMPORTANT RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT

When filing an application in the competition, candidates present their most important research achievement(s), arising directly from their scientific accomplishments.

This description is fundamental for evaluation of the application, because the reviewers place particular weight on the **substantive** importance of the candidate's research achievement(s). Therefore candidates should pay particularly attention to a precise description reflecting the substantive and cognitive value of their research.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

The candidate's research plans for the upcoming year presented in the stipend application will also be taken into consideration in the evaluation of applications. However, they are not the fundamental subject of evaluation of applications as they would be in the case of grant competitions. The START stipend is awarded for what the candidate has already achieved.

CRITERIA APPLIED IN AWARD OF OUTGOING STIPENDS

The main criterion for award of an Outgoing Stipend is the substantive justification for the selection and need for the visit to a foreign institution. The standing of the institution selected by the candidate, including the research potential of its staff and in particular the persons inviting the candidate, will also be considered. The evaluation of the appropriateness of the selection of the institution in terms of the topic of the candidate's research is also important (see also [Remarks concerning Outgoing Stipends as part of the START stipend](#)).

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF COMPETITION RESULTS AND ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

A list of the winners is published on the Foundation's website. Information about the results is also sent to all candidates—first to the winners and their applicants, and then (within three months after announcement of the results of the competition) to the other candidates. The results of the START 2025 competition are expected to be announced in May 2025.

If after reviewing these instructions and the rules for the START programme any questions arise which are **not answered** in the instructions or the rules for the START programme, please contact the START programme coordinators:

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Good luck in the competition!