The following is a translation from Estonian. In case of disputes, the Estonian text shall prevail.

Guidelines for Evaluating Postdoctoral Grant Applications

1. Introduction
    1.1. This directive establishes the evaluation criteria and the principles for evaluating and compiling the ranking lists of the applications submitted according to the "Conditions and Procedure for Postdoctoral Grants".
    1.2. The Estonian Research Council (hereinafter *Council*) is entitled to make well-considered decisions and consult experts where necessary in relation to matters not covered by this directive.

2. Evaluation of Grant Applications
    2.1. The evaluation of the applications takes place in the Estonian Research Information System (hereinafter *ETIS*).
    2.2. All applications are to be evaluated according to the same criteria and procedures in order to ensure equal treatment of all applications.
    2.3. The final ranking list of the applications is formed by taking into consideration all relevant information and by comparing the applications in the (sub-) field-specific ranking lists. The Expert Panel and the Evaluation Committee may use the overview of the bibliometric indicators of the supervisor of the postdoctoral fellow as an additional material for evaluating the applications.
    2.4. The evaluation process is as follows:
        2.4.1. Processing the applications in the Expert Panel
            2.4.1.1. Each application will be reviewed by at least two independent experts, one of whom shall act as a rapporteur. In cooperation with and based on the evaluations given by the experts, the rapporteur will prepare the preliminary final evaluation for each application.
            2.4.1.2. The Expert Panel will confirm the preliminary final evaluation and the preliminary ranking list of the applications.
            2.4.1.3. During the hearing, the preliminary final evaluation will be made available to the applicant and to the institution.
        2.4.2. Processing the applications in the Evaluation Committee
            2.4.2.1. The Evaluation Committee will consider the results of the hearing, approve the final evaluation for each application, and compile the ranking list of the applications.
            2.4.2.2. The applications that have passed the quality threshold will be forwarded to the Panel on Research Ethics.
        2.4.3. Processing the applications in the Panel on Research Ethics
            2.4.3.1. The Panel on Research Ethics will give an evaluation on the criterion of research ethics and research data management.
            2.4.3.2. The Panel on Research Ethics may make proposals for the implementation of the project and/or prescribe conditions that the applicant is required to comply with during the implementation of the project.

2.4.4. Processing the applications in the Evaluation Committee

      2.4.4.1. Based on the final evaluations, which also include the evaluation given by the Panel on Research Ethics, the Evaluation Committee compile the final ranking list of postdoctoral grant applications.

      2.4.4.2. If the application did not pass the threshold in the criterion of research ethics and research data management, then it will not be included in the ranking list and the Evaluation Committee will submit a proposal not to approve the application.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Rating Scale

3.1. Evaluation criteria

When evaluating the applications, the following evaluation criteria are to be used and the scores have to be justified. The justification has to be based on the sub-criteria. It is also possible to add other noteworthy observations for each evaluation criterion.

Evaluation criterion	Sub-criteria	Rating scale
1. Scientific justification for and feasibility of the research project	In this criterion, the scientific justification for and the feasibility of the research project, the clarity of the objectives, the justification for the research plan and risk reduction measures, proposed methods, and resources are to be evaluated, based on the following questions: 1.1. How good and how clear is the scientific justification, incl. how precisely are the research questions and/or (excl. justified exceptional cases) hypotheses defined? 1.2. How suitable and appropriate are the proposed research methods? 1.3. How reasonable and purpose-driven is the research plan, incl. how justified and how suitable is the place where the postdoctoral project is going to be implemented (will the project be carried out entirely at the collaborating institution or partially in Estonia)? 1.4. How well are the potential scientific or methodological problem areas acknowledged and how well are the risk reduction measures and the back-up plan described? 1.5. How specifically and appropriately are the feasibility of the project explained and the necessary resources justified?	From 1 to 5
2. Qualification of the applicant	In this criterion, the qualification of the applicant is to be evaluated, based on the following questions: 2.1. What are the research experiences and the quality of the results of the applicant's previous research activities, incl. participation in (international) cooperation and/or in research projects, number and quality of publications, conference attendance, skills obtained, and other research-related activities?	From 1 to 5

	2.2. How suitable are the scientific competences and the previous experiences of the applicant for successfully carrying out the proposed project?	
3. Qualification of the supervisor	In this criterion, the qualification of the supervisor is to be evaluated, based on the following questions: 3.1. What is the focus and quality of the research and of the results of the research conducted by the supervisor during the past 10 years, incl. the number and quality of publications, the experience in supervising doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows; leadership of and/or participation in domestic and/or international R&D projects, and other research-related activities? 3.2. How suitable is the supervisor's scientific qualification and experience in supervising postdoctoral fellows and doctoral students for supporting this project?	From 1 to 5
4. Importance of the research project, incl. importance for Estonia	In this criterion, the the importance of the research project, incl. the importance for Estonia, is to be evaluated, based on the following questions: 4.1. How specifically and appropriately is the **scientific** importance and the potential impact of the project described, considering the specifics of the research field and topic? 4.2. How clearly has it been defined where and how the new skills and knowledge acquired as a result of the project could be used, incl. in future research? 4.3. How specifically and appropriately is the importance of the project **outside academia**, incl. the importance for Estonia, described, considering the specifics of the research field and topic? 4.4. How well and how sufficiently has the applicant planned the activities of the project for the development of his/her future research career (development of professional and transferable competences, training, supervision, etc.)? 4.5. How well are the plans for public outreach (dissemination of the results among the wider public outside academia) considered?	From 1 to 5
5. Research ethics and research data management *This criterion will be evaluated only by the Panel on Research Ethics*	In this criterion, the aspects of research ethics, incl. the aspects of research data management, that are related to the implementation of the research project are to be evaluated, based on the following questions: 5.1. Has the applicant sufficiently, carefully, and properly assessed whether the project raises the issues of research ethics (e.g., questions related to human participation or involvement of animals; gender, age, cultural, etc. diversity issues; political, religious, societal, historical, and other sensitive topics;	Appropriate or inappropriate

	maintenance of biodiversity, environmental intervention, etc.)?
	5.2. Has the applicant provided a description of the action plan to address the legal requirements of research ethics (e.g., ethics committee approvals, specific research protocols, etc.) and explained how the requirements are to be met during the course of the project?
	5.3. Has the applicant sufficiently, carefully, and properly addressed potential risks that concern research integrity and data management which may arise during the project (e.g., credentials and questions of authorship, ownership of data and intellectual property rights, storage, back-up, and data protection, open data, etc.)?
	5.4. Has the applicant provided a description of the action plan to address the legal requirements of data management (e.g., the collection, management, storage, and destruction of sensitive data; field-specific data protection requirements, etc.) and explained how the requirements are to be met during the course of the project?

3.2. Rating scales and the formation of the final score

3.2.1. A nine-point differentiated rating scale is used for criteria 1, 2, 3, and 4:

- Outstanding (5);
- Very good-Outstanding (4.5);
- Very good (4);
- Good-Very good (3.5);
- Good (3);
- Satisfactory-Good (2.5);
- Satisfactory (2);
- Unsatisfactory-Satisfactory (1.5);
- Unsatisfactory (1).

3.2.2. An undifferentiated rating scale is used for criterion 5:

- Appropriate;
- Inappropriate.

3.2.3. Interpretation of ratings for criteria 1, 2, 3, and 4:

- Unsatisfactory (1) – the application addresses many of the aspects of the evaluation criteria inadequately and/or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- Satisfactory (2) – the application addresses most of the aspects of the evaluation criteria in very general terms and there are significant weaknesses. Major revision and clarification would be needed to improve the application.
- Good (3) – the application addresses most of the relevant aspects of the evaluation criteria well, but a number of shortcomings are present. Some questions could be

elaborated on more thoroughly and more clearly. A sound research project with some issues to be considered.

- Very good (4) – the application addresses most of the relevant aspects of the evaluation criteria very well and only a small number of shortcomings or issues to be considered are present. Minor revision and clarification would be suggested.
- Outstanding (5) – the application is remarkably well elaborated and all sub-criteria of the evaluation criteria have been met at an excellent level. An exceptionally strong application in all respects.

3.2.4. Interpretation of ratings for criterion 5:
- Appropriate – there are no shortcomings; there are some shortcomings or issues to be considered; it will be necessary to fulfil certain conditions during the implementation of the project (adding an explanation is obligatory).
- Inappropriate – there are very significant shortcomings (adding an explanation is obligatory).

3.2.5. The final score will be formed by summing up the scores given to the evaluation criteria. For criterion 3 (Qualification of the supervisor), the coefficient 0.8 is applied. The final score can range from 3.8 to 19 points.

3.3. Threshold

Two types of thresholds are used when evaluating the applications: the qualification threshold and quality threshold.

3.3.1. The qualification threshold for criteria 1, 2, 3, and 4 is 3 points (*good*) before applying the coefficient. The qualification threshold for criterion 5 is the rating "appropriate". If the application does not pass the qualification threshold, then it does not qualify for funding and limitations could be placed upon the applicant in the next call.

3.3.2. The field-specific quality thresholds for team grant applications are as follows:
- Exact Sciences 16.5 points;
- Biological and Environmental Sciences 17 points;
- Engineering and Technology 15.1 points;
- Medical and Health Sciences 15.2 points;
- Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences 14.7 points;
- Social Sciences 15.6 points;
- Humanities and the Arts 16.6 points.

If the application receives less points than the quality threshold before receiving the score for criterion 5, then it does not qualify for funding.

4. Basis for the formation of the ranking list

4.1. The applications will initially be placed into field-specific ranking lists based on the final score given to each application. The applications that have not passed the quality threshold will not be included in the ranking list.

4.2. For ranking the applications with the same final score, the criteria to be used is as follows:

4.2.1. the applications of equal standing will be ranked according to the scores received during the evaluation process in the following order of the evaluation criteria: 1, 2, 3, and 4;

4.2.2. the applications which sustain equal standing after the ranking procedure described in 4.2.1 will be prioritised according to the underrepresented gender among the applicants whose applications rank above the applications of equal standing.

4.3. If the applications sustain equal standing after the ranking procedure described in clauses 4.1 and 4.2, then the applications will be placed into a non-field-specific ranking list and the criteria to be used is as follows:

4.3.1. the applications which have been ranked first in each of the field-specific ranking list will sustain the equal standing;

4.3.2. when ranking the following applications, the development needs of the field, diversity of (sub-)fields, gender balance, the number of the applications that have passed the quality threshold in the field-specific ranking list, and national strategic priorities will be taken into account.