

Evaluation criteria

For all ERC frontier research grants, **scientific excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation**. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

In the case of a Synergy Grant application the peer reviewers will need to see that the collaborative working arrangements between the Principal Investigators can ensure scientific excellence.

During the evaluation, the phase of the Principal Investigator's transition to independence, possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths should be taken into account. Benchmarks set in the relevant profiles above including the expected minimum working time to be

spent on ERC projects, will also be taken into consideration. Synergy Grant Principal Investigators applying as part of a group for a Synergy Grant will be evaluated according to their individual career stage.

In general, projects wholly or largely consisting in the collation and compilation of existing material in new databases, editions or collections are unlikely to constitute ground-breaking or "frontier" research in themselves, however useful such resources might be to subsequent original research. Such projects are therefore unlikely to be recommended for funding by the ERC's panels.

Plagiarism detection software may be used to analyse proposals submitted to the ERC.

The detailed evaluation elements applying to the excellence of the research project and the Principal Investigator are set out below.

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?

To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain (i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a higher-than-normal risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims)?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

*To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (**for Synergy Grants** based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent does the proposal require and demonstrate significant synergies, complementarities and scientific added-value to enable it to achieve its objectives (**for Synergy Grants** based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

2. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Starting and Consolidator

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?

To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Advanced and Synergy

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) has/have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

*To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists (**for Advanced Grant applicants**)?*

Outcome of evaluation

For Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants

At each evaluation step, each proposal will be evaluated and marked for each of the two main elements of the proposal: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses taking into account the marks they have received.

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A.** is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;

- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C. is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A. fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding **if sufficient funds are available**;
- B. meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

For Synergy Grants

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A. is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C. is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A. is of sufficient quality to pass to step 3 of the evaluation;

- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 3 of the evaluation;

At the end of **step 3** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A. fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding **if sufficient funds are available**;
- B. meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

In addition, once the evaluation of their proposal has been completed, applicants to all schemes will receive an evaluation report which will include the ranking range of their proposal among the proposals evaluated by the panel.

Projects recommended for funding will be funded by the ERC if sufficient funds are available. Proposals will be funded in priority order based on their rank.

Applicants may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls based on the outcome of the evaluation. Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call (for 2019 calls see restrictions on submission of proposals under “Eligibility criteria” above).