

Australia France Network of Doctoral Excellence (AUFRANDE)

Guide for Evaluators

February 2023

Executive Summary

This document provides guidance for the assessment of eligible applications to the open PhD positions of the AUFRANDE Program. It describes the general principles and procedures that will be used in the evaluation and selection process. This Guide is intended for all members of the Selection Panels (Evaluators) but also to Applicants willing to perform a self-assessment of their application. This Guide has been prepared following the recommendations of the European Science Foundation Peer Review Guide¹.

Document history

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Disclaimer

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the European Research Executive Agency can be held responsible for them.

¹ The European Science Foundation Peer Review Guide:
https://www.esf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esf/European_Peer_Review_Guide_2011.pdf



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1. About AUFRANDE

The Australia France Network of Doctoral Excellence (AUFRANDE) is a 5-years highly ambitious interdisciplinary doctoral program linking France and Australia, with a strong support from the industry. AUFRANDE seeks to recruit excellent researchers of any nationality, gender and background from around the world for its 64 PhD positions, following an open, transparent, impartial and equitable recruitment procedure in line with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. AUFRANDE is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101081465.

2. Evaluation Principles

The process for the selection of the applicants to AUFRANDE open positions will be extensive and transparent, with the aim of attracting the most talented and motivated students from around the world.

Before starting the evaluation processes, all Evaluators will sign a letter of commitment, declaring possible conflict of interest², agreeing to confidentiality and committing to impartial assessment of all applications. They will be required to read this Guide for Evaluators, the Guide for Applicants and the Program description on the AUFRANDE website (www.aufrande.eu). A briefing session for the Evaluators will be organised by the AUFRANDE Team prior to the evaluation processes, to ensure Evaluators are fully equipped with the correct information, and to answer any questions they may have.

The AUFRANDE Team will oversee the entire evaluation processes, liaising with the Panel Chairs and participating in consensus meetings, where Evaluators will be discussing and deciding on the Applicants' ranking, to ensure evaluation principles are guaranteed and requirements are fulfilled.

Evaluators are prohibited from contacting Applicants during the evaluation process, discussing the evaluation outside the Panel and revealing the identities of the Evaluators.

3. Role and Appointment of Evaluators

A specific Selection Panel will be established for one or more position, holding the responsibility of evaluating and ranking eligible Applicants to this position, and deciding on selected and reserve Applicants. Each Selection Panel will comprise at least 4 Evaluators and will maintain their composition throughout the entire selection process unless a member is changed due to a conflict of interest arising or force majeure.

Each Selection Panel will be composed of:

- 2 internal Evaluators – representatives from the French and the Australian Host / PhD awarding organisations as per the position description;
- At least 1 inter-sectoral Evaluator – representative of a non-academic entity relevant to the research field;
- At least 1 external Evaluator – not belonging to any formalized partner of AUFRANDE.

The Selection Panels will also fulfil the following criteria:

- Extensive experience in doctoral training and supervision;
- Diverse and relevant expertise in the disciplines involved in the research project proposed for the position;
- At least 2 nationalities represented;
- Gender balanced;
- Declare no conflict of interest.

² There is a conflict of interest if the Evaluator has a direct benefit, a close personal or professional relationship with applicant; any other situation that compromises impartiality or casts doubt, or that could reasonably appear to do so.

4. Overview of the Selection Process

Step	What will happen at this step?	Timeframe
1 - Online application	Applicants submit their application(s) through the online portal before the deadline.	14 February – 11 April 2023
2 - Eligibility check	AUFranDE Team and the PhD awarding institutions conduct the initial eligibility check towards AUFranDE entry requirements and MSCA eligibility criteria.	11 – 25 April 2023
3 - Assessment of eligible applications and first ranking of applicants	For each position, all Evaluators of the specific Selection Panel will assess, evaluate and rank the eligible applications, according to the evaluation criteria outlined below. The Selection Panel will shortlist up to 6 Applicants for an interview.	25 April – 22 May 2023
4 - Interviews	Each Selection Panel will conduct the interview of shortlisted Applicants for a position, and assess, evaluate and rank the Applicants according to Table 3.	Notification to short-listed Applicants: 22 – 24 May 2023 Interviews: 5 – 30 June 2023
5 - Final ranking and allocation of positions	Each Selection Panel, supported by the AUFranDE Team, will agree on the final ranking, successful and reserve Applicants. The AUFranDE Team will communicate results to the Applicants.	Early July 2023
6 - Onboarding of successful Applicants	Selected Applicants will go through the admissions process at their research host and PhD awarding universities. Once this step has been completed Applicants will receive offer letters issued by both institutions.	October 2023

Table 1: Evaluation timeline for AUFranDE first call for applicants.

The relevant steps for Evaluators (from Step 3 to 5) are covered below:

Evaluation of eligible applications (step 3)

All applications successfully passing the eligibility check (step 2) will be assessed by a dedicated Selection Panel for the position selected. Evaluators will assess each application individually against the Evaluation Criteria detailed in Table 2, directly on the designated application platform (Slideroom). Where Applicants have applied and been assessed as eligible for more than 1 position, the assessments will proceed simultaneously for all (Evaluators will not see the order of preference of an Applicant's nominated host/project).

Criteria	Score	Weighting (%)
Academic merit: academic transcript, publications, etc.	0–5	30
Research skills and other relevant competences	0–5	25
Research & work experience: 3i dimension, international or industry internships, conferences, etc.	0–5	15
Motivation letter	0–5	10
Recommendation by referees	0–5	10
Public awareness (dissemination and communication activities)	0–5	10
Weighted Average	0–5	100
Scoring guide:		
0 – Fail. The application fails in these criteria or cannot be judged due to incomplete information.		
1 – Poor. The application has serious weaknesses or is addressed in an inadequate manner.		
2 – Fair. The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.		
3 – Good. The application addresses the criterion well, although improvements are required.		
4 – Very Good. The application addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.		
5 – Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question.		

Table 2: Criteria and weighting for scoring applications to AUFranDE positions.

After all evaluations have been completed on Slideroom, a first ranking for each position will be produced based on average scores granted by the Evaluators. In cases where applicants obtain the same score, priority will be given to those who scored highest in academic merit, followed by research skills. These being equal, priority will be given to female Applicants.

The Selection Panel will then set a cut-off score for passing to the next round (3,5 out of 5 as a standard) and will shortlist top ranked Applicants for an interview (up to a maximum of 6 Applicants per position may be shortlisted). Exceptions on the cut-off score may be discussed, if at least 3 applicants are not selected or if the Panel decides to ensure the position will be filled.

Summary of Evaluators' Actions in Step 3:

- Review and evaluate each application against the Evaluation Criteria detailed in Table 2.
- Score each application and provide feedback comments on Slideroom.
- Once all scorings have been completed by all Evaluators, the AUFRANDE Team will produce final rankings so the evaluators can agree on the shortlist of Applicants to be interviewed (3 to 6).

Interview (step 4)

Interviews of the shortlisted Applicants will be conducted by videoconferencing between 5 and 30 June 2023. Applicants shortlisted will be informed at least 5 days before the interview.

Interviews will be performed by all Evaluators of the Selection Panel who will assess the Applicants against the Evaluation Criteria detailed in Table 3.

The interviews will be composed of:

- A 10-min presentation by the Applicant (background and research project). The presentation can be supported by visuals (e.g. PowerPoint – 5 slides maximum).
- A 30-min question-and-answer session.
- 5-min for the Applicant's questions to the Selection Panel.

Criteria	Score	Weighting (%)
Scientific and investigative aptitude and motivation	0–5	30
Research Project: conceptual understanding and suitability	0–5	30
Professional skills: planning, problem solving, IT, data management,	0–5	20
Interpersonal skills: communication, teamwork, initiative, English level	0–5	20
Weighted Average	0–5	100

Table 3: Criteria and weighting for scoring interviews.

Summary of Evaluators' Actions in Step 4:

- Prepare the interviews, jointly decide on questions to be asked by each Evaluator.
- During the interview, evaluate each candidate against the Interview Criteria listed in Table 3.
- Score each criterion and provide feedback comments.

Final ranking and allocation of doctoral positions (step 5)

A final ranking for each position will be produced by combining the interview score (60% weighting) and the first ranking score (40% weighting). A consensus meeting will be organised for each position where the Selection Panel and AUFRANDE Team will agree on a final ranking, the preferred Applicant and the reserve list. In cases where overall scores are identical, first applying Scientific and Investigative aptitude, followed by Research Project. All these being equal, priority will be given to female Applicants.

Summary of Evaluators' Actions in Step 5:

- The AUFRANDE Team will produce the final ranking score, based on the average scores granted by the Evaluators at step 3 (evaluation) and 4 (interview).

- Each Selection Panel will then decide on the final ranking of Applicants based on the final scores and rankings, during a consensus meeting.
- The AUFRANDE Team will then send a conditional offer to the preferred Applicant. In case the preferred Applicant does not accept the position, the first reserve candidate will then be given the conditional offer under the same conditions.

5. Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

All Evaluators must have signed the commitment letter, declaring that they do not have any conflicts of interest with the position being evaluated. Should a conflict arise at any time in the process, Evaluators must immediately inform the AUFRANDE Team, who will arrange for a substitute to the conflicted Evaluator.

The signed commitment letter also declares that Evaluators will maintain confidentiality of all Applicants' personal information and relevant information provided. All Evaluators must respect the confidentiality of the information disclosed in the evaluation process, both in documentation and verbally.

6. Contact

RMIT Europe is coordinating the AUFRANDE Program. For any inquiries or information that cannot be found in the Guide for Evaluators, the Guide for Applicants or on the official AUFRANDE website (www.aufrande.eu), contact AUFRANDE Helpdesk (aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au).