# Australia France Network of Doctoral Excellence (AUFRANDE)
## Guide for Evaluators

June 2024

## 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 for Applicants wishing to perform a self-assessment of their application. This Guide has been prepared following the recommendations of the European Science Foundation Peer Review Guide[1].

## Document history

| Issue date | Version | Changes made/reason for this issue |
|---|---|---|
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## Disclaimer

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[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 highly ambitious 5-year interdisciplinary doctoral program linking France and Australia, with  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 must sign a letter of commitment, declaring possible conflicts of interest[2], agreeing to confidentiality and impartial assessment of all applications. They will be required to read this Guide for Evaluators, the Guide for Applicants, the program description on the AUFRANDE website (www.aufrande.eu), and watch the briefing session organised by the AUFRANDE Team. This is to ensure all 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 discuss and determine Applicants' rankings, to ensure 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 each position, holding the responsibility of  evaluating, ranking, and selecting eligible Applicants. Each Selection Panel will be comprised of at least 4 Evaluators and will maintain its composition throughout the entire selection process, unless a member is changed due to a conflict of interest arising or force majeure. Each Panel should appoint a Chair (preferably the external expert), in charge of coordinating the process and reporting on the Panel's decision.

Each Selection Panel will be composed of:
- 2 internal Evaluators – representatives from the French and Australian Host organisations;
- At least 1 inter-sectoral Evaluator – representative of a non-academic entity relevant to the 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 projects proposed;
- At least 2 nationalities represented;
- Gender balanced;
- Declare no conflict of interest.

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[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 through the online portal (SlideRoom). | Before 27 August 2024 |
| 2 - Eligibility check | The AUFRANDE Team and the PhD awarding institutions conduct the initial eligibility check to confirm AUFRANDE entry requirements and eligibility criteria. | August-September 2024 |
| 3 - Assessment of eligible applications and first ranking of Applicants | For each position, all Evaluators 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. | September 2024 |
| 4 - Interviews | Each Selection Panel will conduct the interview of shortlisted Applicants for a position, and assess, evaluate and rank the Applicants according to the criteria listed in Table 3. | October 2024 |
| 5 - Final ranking and allocation of positions | Each Selection Panel, supported by the AUFRANDE Team, will agree on the final ranking, selected and reserve Applicants. The AUFRANDE Team will communicate results to the Applicants. | October-November 2024 |
| 6 - Onboarding of successful Applicants | Selected Applicants will undergo the enrolment process at their research host and PhD awarding universities. Once this step has been completed, Applicants will receive offer letters from both institutions. | January 2025 |

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. Evaluators will assess each application individually against the Evaluation Criteria detailed in Table 2, directly on the designated application platform (SlideRoom). Applicants may select up to 3 positions in their application form. Where Applicants have applied and been assessed as eligible for more than 1 position, the assessments will proceed simultaneously for all.

| 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:<br>0 – Fail. The application fails in these criteria or cannot be judged due to incomplete information.<br>1 – Poor. The application has serious weaknesses or is addressed in an inadequate manner.<br>2 – Fair. The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.<br>3 – Good. The application addresses the criterion well, although improvements are required.<br>4 – Very Good. The application addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.<br>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 set a cut-off score for passing to the next round (3 out of 5 as a standard) and shortlist top ranked Applicants for an interview (up to a 6 Applicants per position). 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 scores have been awarded, Evaluators agree on the shortlist selection for Applicant interviews (3 to 6).

## Interview (step 4)

Interviews of the shortlisted Applicants will be organised by videoconferencing. Applicants shortlisted will be informed at least 5 days before the interview.

Interviews will be conducted 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 score for each position will be produced by combining the interview score (weighted at 60%) and the first evaluation (40%). A consensus meeting will be organised where the Selection Panel will agree on a final ranking, the preferred Applicant and the reserve list.

**Summary of Evaluators' Actions in Step 5:**
- The AUFRANDE Team produces the final ranking score, based on the average scores granted by the Evaluators at step 3 (evaluation) and 4 (interview).
- Each Selection Panel then decides on the final ranking of Applicants based on the final scores and rankings, during a consensus meeting.
- The AUFRANDE Team sends 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 sign the commitment letter, declaring no conflicts of interest with the evaluated position. 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).