Guidelines for Evaluating PhD Fellowship Applications at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Bergen (UiB)

August 2024 (Translated from Norwegian by a AI tool)

General Comments:

In the evaluation process, several aspects must be considered, and it is important to assess applicants holistically. The guidelines describe what is expected to achieve a certain grade and are intended to help ensure as uniform an assessment as possible among committee members. However, an applicant does not necessarily need to meet all the requirements for a certain grade to be awarded that grade. Evaluators should be aware that the full grading scale may be used.

It is important to assess the potential of the applicant, the project, and the supervisor. A supervisor who is early in their career but demonstrates good scientific development and the ability to build a productive and positive research environment should be considered just as favorably as a more experienced supervisor.

Recent activity should also be emphasized. For example, exam grades from the early years of study should be given less weight than more recent grades, and recent scientific activity should be emphasized more than earlier activity for both the candidate and the supervisor.

Candidate (Weighted 33%)

Factors to consider in the assessment:

- **Scientific qualifications and previous scientific work** (consider the time aspect when evaluating this). It is noted that a newly graduated candidate is not expected to have scientific publications.
- **When evaluating published articles**, factors such as the candidate's contribution (author order), the level of the journals in which the articles are published, and the number of articles should be considered. However, a holistic assessment of the candidate beyond mere bibliometrics is important. Preprints or manuscripts submitted to journals may also be considered. For manuscripts, it should be clearly indicated what stage the work is at in the submission process, what the candidate's contribution is, and to which journal the work has been submitted. The extent to which publications are related to the project or research environment covered by the application should not be considered.
- **Grade level** (For students from institutions that only provide pass/fail, grades will not be considered beyond the expectation that all courses are passed. In such cases, the other criteria will be given more weight.)
- **Relevance of education**
- **Motivation** (as expressed in the application letter)
- **Supervisor's statement**

Grading Scale 1-5

- **Grade 5**: An exceptional applicant. The candidate has very high grades (typically A's) on relevant exams, exceptionally good scientific output and qualifications relative to the time since completing their master's or professional degree. The candidate has often

participated in scientific conferences with their own work, written popular science articles, won awards, or received scholarships based on academic merits, or similar achievements. The candidate clearly describes their motivation for the project and the Ph.D. study in general, and the supervisor's statement strongly supports the application.

- **Grade 4**: An excellent applicant. The candidate has very high grades (typically A's) on relevant exams and good scientific output and qualifications relative to the time since completing their master's or professional degree. If the candidate does not stand out in scientific output, it may be somewhat compensated if they have participated in scientific conferences with their own work, written popular science articles, won awards, or received scholarships based on academic merits, or similar achievements. The candidate clearly describes their motivation for the project and the Ph.D. study in general, and the supervisor's statement supports the application.
- **Grade 3**: A very good applicant. The candidate has high grades (typically B's) on relevant exams and scientific output and qualifications that are expected relative to the time since completing their master's or professional degree. The candidate has rarely participated in scientific conferences with their own work, written popular science articles, won awards, or received scholarships based on academic merits, or similar achievements. The candidate clearly describes their motivation for the project and the Ph.D. study in general, and the supervisor's statement supports the application.
- **Grade 2**: A good applicant. The candidate has ordinary grades (typically B's and C's) on relevant exams and little scientific experience relative to the time since completing their master's or professional degree. The candidate typically has not participated in scientific conferences with their own work, written popular science articles, won awards, or received scholarships based on merits, or similar achievements. The candidate clearly describes their motivation for the project and the Ph.D. study in general, and the supervisor's statement supports the application.
- **Grade 1**: The applicant has weak grades and lacks research experience. The motivation is poorly described.

Project (Weighted 33%)

Factors to consider in the assessment:

- **Scientific quality and originality of the project**. The Ph.D. project should consist of research leading to new knowledge. Literature reviews and the production of review articles are not considered innovative research and should not constitute a substantial part of the Ph.D. work.
- **Appropriateness and sufficiency of datasets and methods** to achieve the project's goals, and the availability of proposed methodologies or competence in method development.
- **Realistic scope of the project**, including a timeline.
- **Ethical considerations**. For projects using patient data/material, there must be REK approval or an explanation of why approval is not necessary. Alternatively, there may be a plan for how REK approval will be obtained before the project starts.
- **Realistic project costs**, clearly outlined in a budget.
- **Realistic publication plan**.

Grading Scale 1-5

- **Grade 5**: The project is original, innovative, and of very high scientific quality, while also being realistic within the timeframe of a Ph.D. fellowship. The project is very well

described according to the specified template. Any datasets and proposed methodologies are available and of high quality, and the necessary competence is available. Publication in highly reputable journals is expected. Necessary ethical considerations are addressed.

- **Grade 4**: The project is original and of high scientific quality, while also being realistic within the timeframe of a Ph.D. fellowship. The project is well described in whole or in part according to the specified template. Any datasets and proposed methodologies are available and of high quality, and the necessary competence is available. Publication in highly reputable international journals within the field is expected. Necessary ethical considerations are addressed.
- **Grade 3**: The project is original and of high scientific quality, while also being realistic within the timeframe of a Ph.D. fellowship. The project is well described in whole or in part according to the specified template, but there is some uncertainty regarding areas such as methodology or data quality. Publication in highly reputable international journals within the field is realistic. Necessary ethical considerations are addressed.
- **Grade 2**: The project is of good scientific quality while also being realistic within the timeframe of a Ph.D. fellowship. The project is described according to the specified template, but there is uncertainty regarding areas such as methodology or data quality. Publication in good international journals is unrealistic, even within the field. Necessary ethical considerations are addressed.
- **Grade 1**: The project is poorly described, falls outside the requirements or scope for a Ph.D. study, is not described according to the specified template, ethical considerations are not addressed, or for other reasons.

Research Environment (Weighted 33%)

Factors to consider in the assessment:

- **Merits of the supervisory team** (e.g., publications, external funding, and awards).
- **The environment's national and international network and collaboration**.
- **Main supervisor's research activity** (emphasis on the last 5 years).
- **Main supervisor's supervisory experience** (It is positive if the main supervisor has previous experience supervising Ph.D. candidates, but the number of candidates is not decisive).
- **Resources available to the environment**, including methodological strengths or strengths in method development relevant to the project, and available operational funds for the project.

Bibliometric measures such as the H-index and the number of citations can be used as a tool in the evaluation, but the faculty has strong research environments and fields that may not score well if these measures are used uncritically. The same applies to assessing journal quality based solely on impact factor or NSD's level division.

For younger main supervisors, age and length of research career should be considered in evaluating publication activity, ability to obtain external funding, and experience as a supervisor.

Grading Scale 1-5

- **Grade 5**: An internationally leading environment that publishes in top international journals (with authorship indicating significant contribution to the work) and collaborates with other very strong environments in Norway and abroad. The main

supervisor is highly merited given their age and research field, is in an active phase of their career, and has previously supervised Ph.D. candidates to completion. For main supervisors early in their careers, experience as a co-supervisor for candidates who have defended or as the main supervisor for candidates who have not yet defended can be emphasized. The environment has the resources to carry out the project. The main supervisor has or has had funding from the EU, NFR, or other external sources. The number and size of grants should be considered, but the main supervisor's age and career stage should also be taken into account.

- **Grade 4**: A nationally leading environment that publishes in very good international journals and collaborates with very strong environments in Norway and abroad (with authorship indicating significant contribution to the work). The main supervisor is highly merited given their age and research field, is in an active phase of their career, and has previously supervised Ph.D. candidates. For main supervisors early in their careers, experience as a co-supervisor for candidates who have defended or as the main supervisor for candidates who have not yet defended can be emphasized. The environment has the resources to carry out the project. The main supervisor has or has had funding from the EU, NFR, or other external sources.
- **Grade 3**: A very good research environment that publishes in leading journals within the field and collaborates with good environments in Norway and abroad (with authorship indicating significant contribution to the work). The main supervisor is merited according to age and research field and is in an active phase of their career. The main supervisor may not necessarily have supervised Ph.D. candidates to completion but has experience as a co-supervisor for candidates who have defended or as the main supervisor for candidates who have not yet defended. For main supervisors early in their careers, experience as a supervisor for master's students can be emphasized. The environment has the resources to carry out the project. The main supervisor or environment has or has had external funding.
- **Grade 2**: A good research environment that publishes in international journals but does not collaborate much outside of UiB. The main supervisor is in an active phase of their career but typically has not previously supervised Ph.D. candidates to completion. Experience as a main supervisor for master's students, co-supervisor for Ph.D. candidates, or as a main supervisor for Ph.D. candidates who have not yet defended counts positively. The environment has the resources to carry out the project. The environment has or has had funding from less competitive sources such as the Collaboration Committee.
- **Grade 1**: The environment and main supervisor have low research activity, do not publish internationally, and/or do not have the resources to carry out the project, or for other reasons.

Extra Points for Planned Overseas Stays

The faculty encourages fellows to undertake overseas stays of 6 to 12 months. Therefore, planned overseas stays give an additional 0.5 points in the total score. For the planned overseas stay to provide extra points, the following must be met:

- A formal invitation naming the candidate from the foreign institution must be attached to the application.
- It must be clearly stated in the project description, timeline, motivation letter, and supervisor's statement how the overseas stay will be integrated into the overall project and how it will enrich the project and the Ph.D. education.