

Guidelines for assessing applications for Post Doctoral positions

Faculty of Medicine, UiB

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General comments

According to Norwegian law, the purpose of post-doctoral positions is to recruit people who have the potential to qualify for scientific top positions. ([§ 1-2. Postdoktorer](#)). This makes it important that the assessment of the applicant and application as a whole, considers if the applicant is likely to qualify for a permanent academic position at the UiB (or at other academic institutions). Achieving this takes time, and most researchers will not be directly qualified for a permanent position after the post-doctoral period.

The Faculty of Medicine aims to give its researchers the opportunity to build an independent profile at an early stage of their careers. When the applicant's scientific qualifications are assessed, the timeframe of the achievement and their potential should be considered. An applicant who just defended their PhD, can be ranked as highly as someone who completed their PhD several years ago, even if the latter has a more extensive list of publications or scientific production. In the same way, a young mentor who is developing in a good way can be ranked as highly as older, more merited researcher when applications are considered.

For future career opportunities, it is important that the post-doctoral fellows are allowed to develop their own, independent profile. To ensure this, both the application and the mentor statement should include a description of how career development and academic independence will be developed during the post-doctoral period. *It is required that the applicants change their group affiliation between the PhD and the post doc period.* Applications not fulfilling this requirement will not be considered.

When assessing an application, several factors should be considered, and it is important to assess the application as a whole. The guidelines describe what is expected for each grade and are meant to aid the committee to evaluate the applicants fairly. However, this does not necessarily mean that an applicant must fulfil all criteria to obtain a certain grade. It is important that those who assess the applications are conscious to use the full scale.

Applicant (50%)

Factors to be considered:

- Scientific qualifications (mainly publications) and previous scientific activity
- When considering published work, factors such as the applicant's contribution (order of authors), level of the journal and number of articles should come into account, but it is important the evaluation is not just based on bibliometrics. Preprints or submitted manuscripts may also be considered. For manuscripts, information on the stage of the publication process, the applicant's contribution and the name of the journal must be included in the application. It is not relevant if previous publications or manuscripts are connected to the project or research group in the current application.
- Scientific independence and plans for career development and independence
- Mentor statement

Grading – Grading Scale 1-5

Grade 5: An exceptional applicant with unusually high scientific qualifications and exceptional scientific activity considering the time since their PhD defence. The applicant has typically received or applied for external funding from national or international sources. The applicant may have participated in scientific conferences with their own work (beyond what was necessary for their PhD), written popular science articles, participated in relevant committees or boards, been awarded prizes or scholarships based on their academic merits, supervised “særøppgave”, bachelor or master students, or similar. The applicant describes their motivation for the project and a future academic career well and can show how they will achieve independence during the fellowship. The mentor statement describes clearly why the applicant has the potential for an academic career, and how the mentor and the research environment will contribute to the development of the applicant’s independence.

Grade 4: A great applicant with very good scientific qualifications and scientific activity as expected considering the time since their PhD defence. The applicant has typically either received or applied for external funding from national or international sources. If the applicant does not distinguish themselves with their production, this can to some degree be compensated if the applicant has presented their own work at scientific conferences (beyond what was necessary for their PhD), written popular science articles, participated in relevant committees or boards, been awarded prizes or scholarships based on their academic merits, supervised “særøppgave”, bachelor or master students, or similar. The applicant describes their motivation for the project and a future academic career well and can show how they will achieve independence during the fellowship. The mentor statement describes clearly why the applicant has the potential for an academic career, and how the mentor and the research environment will contribute to the development of the applicant’s independence.

Grade 3: A very good applicant with good scientific qualifications and scientific activity as expected considering the time since their PhD defence. The applicant has typically not received or applied for external funding from national or international sources. The applicant has not necessarily presented their own work at scientific conferences (beyond what was necessary for their PhD), written popular science articles, participated in relevant committees or boards, been awarded prizes or scholarships based on their academic merits, supervised “særøppgave”, bachelor or master students, or similar. The applicant describes their motivation for the project and a future academic career well and can show how they will achieve independence during the fellowship. The mentor statement describes clearly why the applicant has the potential for an academic career, and how the mentor and the research environment will contribute to the development of the applicant’s independence.

Grade 2: A good applicant with adequate scientific qualifications, but less scientific activity than what could be expected considering the time since their PhD defence. The applicant has not received or applied for external funding from national or international sources. The applicant has typically not presented their own work at scientific conferences (beyond what was necessary for their PhD), written popular science articles, participated in relevant committees or boards, been awarded prizes or scholarships based on their academic merits, supervised “særøppgave”, bachelor or master students, or similar. The applicant describes their motivation for the project and a future academic career well and can show how they will achieve independence during the fellowship. The mentor statement describes clearly why the applicant has the potential for an academic career, and how the mentor and the research environment will contribute to the development of the applicant’s independence.

Grade 1: The applicant has inadequate scientific qualifications, poorly described motivation, an insufficient plan to achieve independence, an insufficient mentor statement, or other significant shortcomings. Applicants who do not plan a career in academia should be given this grade, regardless of the other criteria.

Project (30%)

Factors to be considered:

- The scientific quality and originality of the project.
- That the data set and methodology is adequate to reach the aim of the project and that the suggested methodology is available.
- That the scope of the project is realistic and that a reasonable time plan is provided.
- That the relevant ethical questions have been addressed. Projects using patient data/ material require an approval from the ethics committee, or an explanation why this is not needed. If not yet available, there should be a plan for how to obtain ethical approvals before starting the project.
- That the costs of the project are realistic and presented in a budget.

Grading – Grading scale 1-5

Grade 5: The project is original, innovative and of a very high academic standard, while remaining realistic within the time frame of the project. The project is very well described, using the available template. Any data sets and proposed methodology is available and of high quality, and the necessary competence is available. Publication in highly merited journals is expected. All necessary ethical considerations have been made.

Grade 4: The project is original and of a high academic standard while remaining realistic within the time frame of the project. The project is well described, fully or partly using the available template. Any data sets and proposed methodology is available and of high quality, and the necessary competence is available. Publication in good international journals within the field is expected. All necessary ethical considerations have been made.

Grade 3: The project is original and of a high scientific standard, while remaining realistic within the time frame of the project. The project is described, fully or partly using the available template, but there is some uncertainty in areas like methodology or data quality. Publication in good international journals within the field is realistic. All necessary ethical considerations have been made.

Grade 2: The project is of a good scientific standard while remaining realistic within the time frame of the project. The project is described, fully or partly using the available template, but there is uncertainty in areas like methodology or data quality. Publications in highly merited international journals is unrealistic, also within the field. Necessary ethical considerations have been made.

Grade 1: The project is poorly or inadequately described, is not realistic within the timeframe of a postdoc, is not described using the template, is lacking in the ethical considerations, or similar.

Research community (20 %)

Factors to be considered:

- The research merits of the research community (publications, external funding, awards)
- The national and international network and collaboration of the research community
- The research activity of the mentor (mainly in the last 5 years)
- The previous supervisor experience of the mentor (it is a positive that the main supervisor can refer to previous experience with PhD supervision and postdoctor mentoring, but the number is not

decisive).

- The research community's resources, including methodological strengths or strengths within methodological development (relevant to the project), and available funding for running costs for the project in question.

Bibliometric tools like H-index and quotations can be used to aid the assessment, but the Faculty of Medicine has good research groups and subject areas that would not be highly rated if this is used without caution. The same applies to assessing journal quality solely on the basis of impact factor or NSD-level.

For younger mentors, their age and length of their career should be part of the evaluation of their publication activity, ability to obtain external funding and supervision experience.

Grading – Grading scale 1-5

Grade 5: Internationally leading research community which publishes in very highly merited international journals (with author contributions that indicate significant input to the paper) and collaborates with other very strong groups in Norway and abroad. The mentor is very highly merited considering their age and research field, in an active phase of their career and has previously supervised PhD candidates or mentored post-doctoral fellows. Depending on the age of the mentor, their experience co-supervising PhD candidates can be considered. The community has the necessary resources available to see the project through. The mentor receives or has received funding from the EU, the Research Council of Norway, or other sources. The size and number of the grants should be considered, while also taking the age and stage of career of the mentor into account.

Grade 4: Nationally leading research community which publishes in very good international journals (with author contributions that indicate significant input to the paper) and collaborates with other very strong groups in Norway and abroad. The mentor is highly merited considering their age and research field, in an active phase of their career and has often previously supervised PhD candidates or mentored post-doctoral fellows. Depending on the age of the mentor, their experience co-supervising PhD candidates can be considered. The community has the necessary resources available to see the project through. The mentor receives or has received funding from the EU, the Research Council of Norway, or other sources. The size and number of the grants should be considered, while also taking the age and stage of career of the mentor into account.

Grade 3: Very good research community which publishes in leading international journals within their field and collaborates with other very strong groups in Norway and abroad. The mentor is merited considering their age and research field, in an active phase of their career and might have previously supervised PhD candidates or mentored post-doctoral fellows. For younger mentors, their experience co-supervising PhD candidates can be considered. The research community has the necessary resources available to see the project through. The mentor or research environment receives or has previously received funding from external sources. The size and number of the grants should be considered, while also taking the age and stage of career of the mentor into account.

Grade 2: Good research community which publishes internationally but does not collaborate much outside the UiB. The mentor is in an active phase of their career but has limited experience as a PhD supervisor or mentor for post-doctoral fellows. The community has the necessary resources available to see the project through. The research environment receives or has previously received funding from external sources.

Grade 1: The mentor or research community has low or no research activity, do not publish internationally, or the research community does not have the resources to complete the project, or other shortcomings.

Extra points for planned stays abroad

The faculty encourages post-doctoral fellows to go abroad for longer research stays. To encourage this, a planned stay abroad adds an additional 0.5 point in the total score. For this to apply, the following requirements must be met:

- A formal invitation letter from the relevant institution, naming the applicant, must be enclosed with the application.
- The project plan, time plan, motivation letter and mentor statement should all state clearly how the stay abroad will be integrated in the project and how the stay will enrich the project.