

Regulations of the FOCUS Programme by the Foundation for Polish Science

PREAMBLE

The FOCUS Programme aims at supporting the most active young scientists with a significant record of academic achievements in a research area selected every year by the FNP (hereinafter referred to as the Foundation), which, in the opinion of the Foundation, is of particular importance for fostering science and development of Poland.

The support offered by the Foundation is designed to allow scientists to take up new, original, promising and significant directions in research, and to provide additional assistance in the initial stages of the process of building personal research teams. The Programme is addressed to persons whose academic track record guarantees scientific independence and proper use of resources.

§ 1

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The objectives of the FOCUS Programme are accomplished by awarding scientists with individual research grants and through a closed grant competition.
2. The research grants under the FOCUS Programme are awarded in an open competition covering the research area chosen every year by the Foundation.
3. The competition is addressed to persons who meet all of the following conditions:
 - a. hold at least a doctorate degree;
 - b. are actively engaged in research activity and achieving significant scientific results;
 - c. are now, or will be employed at the time of signing the contract with the Foundation at a domestic institution whose statutory objectives include conducting scientific research;
 - d. intend to lead (or have been leading for not more than 2 years) an independent scientific team;
 - e. while receiving the grant, will not be beneficiaries of other grant programmes of the Foundation, excluding the conference stipends.
4. The Foundation may set additional conditions for the candidates, depending on the research area chosen in a given year. Information on such additional conditions can be found in the annual programme of the Foundation and on its website.
5. The research grant comprises:
 - a. funds for a personal stipend for the applicant and personal stipends for the collaborating young Ph.D.s. and Ph.D. students;
 - b. funds for financing purchases (equipment, materials necessary for conducting research, books, journals, etc.), business trips, exchanges with foreign scientific establishments, conferences;
 - c. funds for technical assistance, including acquisition of additional sources of financing (grants, subsidies, stipends).

6. The grants shall be awarded for a period of three years.
7. Under justified circumstances a grant may be awarded for further two years, provided that the laureate obtains additional funding from external sources (outside of the employing institution).
8. Laureates shall also have the right to apply for additional grants in a closed competition organised by the Foundation, which are to be used for improving research facilities (i.e. purchase, repair or modernisation of equipment, modernisation of laboratory premises). The grant competition shall commence no later than 5 months from the award of the grant.
9. The number and amount of the grants, as well as the amounts allocated to the grant competition, shall be identify every year by the Executive Board of the Foundation and announced in the annual programme of the Foundation. The amount of the personal stipend awarded to the laureate, representing a part of the grant, shall be defined each year by the Executive Board of the Foundation.

§ 2

COMPETITION RULES

1. The Programme shall be conducted in the form of an open competition.
2. The research grant application shall contain the following elements:
 - a. entry form (in the Polish and English language);
 - b. title and short description of intended research (in English);
 - c. information on the academic record of the applicant and his/her achievements (in English);
 - d. description of the applicant's team, with whom he/she intends to conduct the research, the equipment already held and a list of equipment necessary for conducting the research (in English);
 - e. framework financial plan (according to the enclosed form);
 - f. in the case of projects involving tests on animals – the consent of a competent ethics commission required under regulations pertaining to animal testing;
 - g. in the case of projects involving research into protected plant, animal and fungi species, or carried out in protected areas – the permit or consent required under nature protection regulations;
 - h. in the case of projects involving research into genetically modified organisms or using such organisms – a statement of the head of the Unit confirming the securing of a consent required under regulations applying to genetically modified organisms.
3. If the candidate is employed at a Polish research institution, he/she shall enclose a certificate of employment issued by the employer. If the candidate is not employed in

Poland, he/she shall enclose information on the planned place of employment and position and a letter of recommendation from the head of the Unit.

4. Applications shall be delivered to the seat of the Foundation in 5 counterparts within the time limit set by the Foundation. In the case of mailed application the date of posting shall prevail. Applications delivered after the time limit shall not be considered.
5. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicants at every stage of the competition by submitting a written request.
6. The Executive Board shall appoint reviewers to assess the submitted applications. Each reviewer shall receive a set of applications, grade them and place in the ranking list, giving a short explanation. The reviewers shall include at least two persons engaged in permanent scientific research outside Poland.
7. The opinion of the reviewers shall take into account:
 - a. an assessment of the academic track record and scientific achievements of the candidate;
 - b. an assessment of the candidate's potential and chances for achieving a significant success in the foreseeable future;
 - c. an assessment of the scientific achievements indicated by the candidate;
 - d. the significance of the proposed research topics for the development of the field supported by the competition;
 - e. originality of the research subject, the theses presented in the project and the proposed methodology;
 - f. the potential of the candidate's research team and the number of domestic and foreign grants obtained by the team members.
8. In the event of the applications being of similar value, preference shall be given to candidates who have done a post-doctoral course of studies outside Poland, or who intend to work at an institution other than the one awarding them their doctorates.
9. A ranking list, used for selecting candidates for the formal interview, shall be drawn up on the basis of the opinions and assessments of the reviewers.
10. The interviews with the best candidates shall be conducted by a commission appointed by the Executive Board of the Foundation, which may include the reviewers and Foundation representatives.
11. The grant award decisions in the FOCUS Programme shall be taken by the Executive Board of the Foundation on the basis of reviewers' opinions and the results of the interviews.
12. The Foundation shall notify the interested parties of the results of the competition in writing. The list of successful applicants, with information on their academic achievements and careers shall be published on the website of the Foundation. It may also be publicised in other media.

13. The names, recommendations and opinions of the reviewers shall be confidential. However, the Foundation reserves the right to publish every year an alphabetical list of advisers, experts and reviewers co-operating with the Foundation in the implementation of all its programmes.

§ 3

RULES OF THE CLOSED GRANT COMPETITION WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE FOCUS PROGRAMME

1. The Foundation addresses the laureates with the invitation to participate in a closed grant competition, the subject of which are funds earmarked for improving their research facilities.
2. The grant competition for the laureates in a given edition of the FOCUS programme shall be organised only once, unless otherwise resolved by the Executive Board of the Foundation.
3. The grants awarded in this competition may be used for:
 - a. financing the final stages of building investments;
 - b. modernisation, overhaul of buildings and premises used for scientific work;
 - c. relocation and purchase of technical equipment and furnishing for new or modernised premises;
 - d. purchase, modernisation or repair of research equipment;
 - e. purchase of computer equipment;
 - f. purchase of software needed to complete a project;
 - g. purchase of materials and consumables needed to complete a project.
4. Each laureate shall have the right to submit one application in the grant competition. The requested grant amount shall not exceed 50% of the total funds earmarked by the Foundation to the grants in a given edition of the competition. Various financial proposals may be included in one application (e.g. purchases, repairs, overhauls, services, etc.).
5. Applications shall be sent using the form enclosed.
6. Applications shall be delivered to the seat of the Foundation in three counterparts, within the time limit set by the Foundation.
7. The Executive Board shall appoint reviewers to assess the applications submitted in the grant competition.
8. The decisions on the award of a grant for improving research facilities and on the grant amount shall be taken by the Executive Board of the Foundation on the basis of reviewers' opinions and the results of the interviews with the laureates of FOCUS participating at this competition.

9. The Foundation shall notify the interested parties of the results of the competition in writing. The list of successful applicants, with information on their academic achievements and careers shall be published on the website of the Foundation. It may also be publicised in other media.

§ 4

RULES OF GRANT UTILISATION

1. The rules of grant utilisation are defined in detail in a trilateral contract specifying the financing conditions and the rights and obligations of the laureate, the employing Unit and the Foundation.
2. The laureate shall be obligated to use the funds awarded by the Foundation in an economical manner, using all available cost-cutting possibilities.
3. During the performance of the grant financing contract, the laureate shall be obligated to observe legal regulations in force, in particular to obtain all the necessary official permits.
4. The Foundation reserves the right to change its decisions and request that the funds be returned, in the event of a breach of the grant utilisation conditions defined in the contract, and particularly if the funds have not been utilised in accordance with their purpose, or if the beneficiary has failed to fulfil his/her obligations within the stipulated time limit.

§ 5

FINANCING AND REPORTING RULES

1. The grant shall be transferred to the account of the Unit (the grant part) and to the accounts of the laureates and his/her stipendees (the stipend part).
2. The laureate shall be the sole person in charge of the grant part.
3. The personal stipend of the laureate, as well as the stipends for the Ph.D. students and young Ph.D.s participating in his/her research project (who must be under the age of 35, or, in the case of persons taking up a child care leave – under 37 years of age), shall be paid directly by the Foundation into their accounts. Detailed rules of receiving and disbursing stipends to the Ph.D. students and young Ph.D.s designated by the laureate under a specific grant shall be defined in a separate contract concluded between all the interested parties (the Foundation, laureate, scholar).
4. During the subsidy period the laureate shall be obligated to conduct research in accordance with the assumptions presented in the application, and to take steps aimed at promoting science and its role in society.
5. After every year of the grant realisation the laureate shall be obligated to present information on the work progress and to submit a final report after the project completion. The laureate shall also be obligated to present the effects of the subsidised

research at a meeting of laureates, on a date set by the Foundation. The Foundation shall have the right to publicise information on the results achieved by the laureate thanks to the grant and to verify such results.

6. The laureate or the Unit shall be obligated to immediately notify the Foundation of any circumstances that may adversely affect the correctness of the utilisation of the grant or the stipend. In the event of the laureate accepting a foreign contract exceeding three months, the Foundation shall set the conditions of grant continuation or suspension.
7. The Foundation reserves the right to assess the utilisation of the grant and to inspect and audit the financial documentation during the financing period and for three years thereafter.
8. During the subsidy period the laureate shall be obligated to inform of the patronage of the Foundation in publications prepared for printing. The laureate shall also be obligated to notify the Foundation of any publicity activities conducted on his/her initiative or the initiative of the media, such as press conferences, broadcasts, films, etc., popularising the research results achieved thanks to the support of the Foundation.
9. The subsidy may be withdrawn or suspended particularly in the event of the laureate failing to perform his/her obligations, failing to achieve satisfactory work results, breaching ethical rules or acting to the detriment of the good name of the Foundation.

§ 6

FINAL PROVISIONS

1. Any opinions gathered during the competition procedure may not be disclosed to third parties.
2. Any amendments to these Regulations must be approved by the Executive Board of the Foundation.
3. The Regulations were adopted by the Executive Board of the Foundation for Polish Science on 18.01.2006.