



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



MCAST



Guidelines and Regulations 2024



Resource Distribution and Project Duration Summary

2024 Total Budget	EUR 150,000
Maximum Funding per Research Fellowship	Up to EUR 30,000 per Research Fellowship
Maximum Duration per Research Fellowship	1 year (with a potential 6-month extension in exceptional circumstances as per these Guidelines and Regulations 2024)
Co-funding	The fund will support a maximum of 100% of total eligible project costs, with the option for additional contributions by the Economic Operator at their discretion

1. Introduction

The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), in consultation with the Malta College of Arts Science & Technology (MCAST), and the Malta Chamber of SMEs, is pleased to launch a scheme to make available a number of research fellowship positions at the MCAST in collaboration with economic partners.

By means of this initiative, MEYR will facilitate Research and Innovation (R&I) Projects involving the MCAST and economic partners. In addition to fostering collaborative R&I Projects, this initiative aims to promote sustainable partnerships between academic researchers and economic stakeholders. By encouraging the exchange of expertise and resources, the program seeks to contribute to the long-term growth and competitiveness of both the academic and economic sectors in Malta. This will not only advance the frontiers of research but also cultivate a dynamic ecosystem where academia and industry mutually benefit from shared insights and advancements.

The scheme shall provide financial support for Research Fellowships fostering joint R&I Projects between economic stakeholders and the MCAST in the following areas: Smart Manufacturing, and/or Sustainable use of Resources for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, and/or Future Digital Technologies.

2. Definitions

Academic/Management of MCAST

- An Academic/Management is an employee of MCAST who is a full-time employee of MCAST.

Applicant

- An applicant refers to an individual eligible to partake in a Project in line with these Guidelines and Regulations. Subsequently, this individual applies for funding under the Scheme.
- As per section 3, Applicant should comprise an individual holding a Master's degree or higher. The Applicant is required to collaborate closely with at least one representative from an Economic Operator and one from the MCAST Academic/Management domain to finalise the application.
- Specific details of who can apply may be found in Section 3.1.

Application

- An application refers to a submission that includes all required documents and any annexes provided by an eligible applicant.

Background Intellectual Property (IP)

- Background IP means any data, information, or know-how (tangible or intangible) whatever its form or nature, including any IP and IP Rights (IPRs) that is/are:
 - i. owned by a party or that a party has a right to license, prior to the start date of the Project; or
 - ii. developed or acquired by a party independently from the work in the Project even if in parallel with the performance of the Project,but solely to the extent that such data, information, know-how, IP and/or IPRs are used in or introduced into the Project by the party who owns or has the right to license it.

Beneficiary

- The Research Fellows are the primary recipients of the grant. The allocated funds, which shall be transferred to MCAST, will be managed by the Research Fellow with the assistance of the MCAST research post-award managers, subject to the Terms and Conditions of the grant. Throughout the R&I Project's duration, the Fellow will be employed by MCAST and will bear the responsibility for project implementation. Concurrently, the Representative(s) of the Economic Operator(s) and the Academic(s)/Management involved in the Project shall be responsible for supporting the Research Fellow in the Project implementation.

Consumables

- Consumables are goods or items used exclusively in support of the Project objectives and are used up or depleted during the course of the Project (e.g. laboratory supplies). They explicitly do not encompass supply items acquired to facilitate various activities of the Project (e.g. stationery items).

Economic Operator

- An Economic Operator is a business or other organisation that supplies goods, works, or services within the context of market operations. To be eligible to participate in this Research Fellowship Scheme, an Economic Operator must actively conduct economic operations in Malta.

Eligibility

- The Eligibility criteria are set out in Section 3 of this document. Applications shall be screened by the Eligibility and Evaluation Panel according to these criteria. Applications that are not eligible shall not be processed further and shall not undergo evaluation.

Eligibility and Evaluation Panel (EEP)

- An Eligibility and Evaluation Panel (EEP) shall be appointed to award Research Fellowships to the best applicants per the Guidelines and Regulations in this document. The EEP shall be composed of a minimum of three qualified individuals—two from

MCAST (one being Chair) and another from the Permanent Secretary (MEYR)—with the option of appointing an advisory committee to the EEP.

Equipment

- Equipment refers to tools, machinery, devices, or other tangible assets purchased for specific activities, processes, or operations required to achieve the Project’s objectives. Each proposed Equipment item should be clearly named, described and its use justified in the proposal.

Evaluation

- Applications that pass the Eligibility criteria stipulated in Section 3 shall be evaluated by the EEP according to the Evaluation criteria listed in Section 5 of this document.

Intellectual Property (IP)

- “Intellectual Property” or “IP” means all that which arises, before the start date of the Project or during the course of the project, from the expression of ideas, know-how, artistic works, literary works, musical works, audiovisual works, data, databases, software, inventions, trademarks, signs, distinctive devices, designs, technical know-how, products, or processes.

Maximum Funding

- The maximum amount of funding that may be allocated per Research Fellow employed on a R&I Project shall be a total of €30,000 per year. This includes:
 - i. personnel costs for the employment of the Research Fellow employed on the Project through the Scheme are at an hourly rate of €35/hour (up to a maximum of €15,000), and
 - ii. a maximum of €15,000 per application for: Consumables, Equipment, Travel, Scientific information, Open Access Publications, Other relevant activities, and Subcontracting Activities.
- A Research Fellow may be employed for a maximum of one year, with the possibility of a further six-month extension (ONLY subject to approval AND provision of funds by MEYR).

Personnel costs:

- The costs of the Research Fellow for employment on the relevant Project.

Post-Award Monitoring Panel

- A Post-Award Monitoring Panel refers to a group responsible for overseeing and evaluating the progress of research projects after they have been funded. This could involve monitoring financial aspects, project timelines, and deliverables, and ensuring that the research is conducted in accordance with the agreed-upon objectives.

Representative of an Economic Operator

- A Representative of an Economic Operator is an individual employed by the Economic Operator or someone closely affiliated with the Economic Operator, such as a consultant. This person is officially designated to this position by a legal representative of the Economic Operator.

Research and Innovation (R&I) Project (Project)

- A project eligible for support under this scheme is referred to as an R&I Project. The scheme allows for the submission of an R&I project proposal application with one Research Fellow per application. A detailed description of the R&I Project must be provided in the application. The R&I project shall clearly indicate the contribution to one or more of the following areas:
 - i. Smart Manufacturing, and/or
 - ii. Sustainable use of Resources for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, and/or
 - iii. Future Digital Technologies.

Research Fellow

- A Research Fellow is an individual engaged in postgraduate research within an academic institution (MCAST) and in collaboration with an economic operator. This position involves conducting independent and original research in a specific field or discipline as per the approved R&I Project, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and understanding within that area.

Subcontracted Activity

- A Subcontracted Activity refers to any project-related task, which includes but is not limited to consultancy, not directly performed by the Research Fellow, MCAST Academic/Management or Economic Operator involved in the project. Instead, it is executed by a third party, whether local or foreign, individual, company, partnership, or entity, under any terms and conditions.

3. Eligibility

Applications shall first be screened in terms of eligibility criteria listed in this section 3. Ineligible applications in terms of the points below shall not be processed further and shall not undergo evaluation.

Incomplete Applications or Applications submitted after the submission deadline shall be automatically deemed ineligible.

3.1 Who Can Apply?

The Applicant must be an individual holding a Master's degree or higher. The applicant is required to have obtained letters of support from at least one representative from an Economic Operator and one from the Academic/Management of MCAST to finalise the application.

To be eligible under this scheme, a Research Fellow shall hold a valid permit to work in Malta upon signing of the contract of service in accordance with the table 'Timeframes' in section 3.5 and shall be employed on the R&I Project on a part-time basis.

3.2 Project Duration

An R&I Project shall have a duration of one (1) year and a Research Fellow shall be engaged on the Project for a duration of one (1) year. The prospect of an extension of another six (6) months to finalise the research is ONLY subject to:

- i. the request for extension submitted by the Research Fellow at least four (4) months before the end date of the Project, AND
- ii. funding for a six-month extension to the Project being granted by MEYR.

If the extension is approved by MEYR, funds that have not been spent during the first year may be carried over to be used during this period.

A Project shall start on the date of employment of the Research Fellow with the MCAST to work on the R&I Project.

3.3 Eligible Costs

Eligible costs for an R&I Project include:

1. The Personnel costs to MCAST for employment of the Research Fellow are at an hourly rate of €35/hour with a maximum of €15,000
2. Costs of Consumables
3. Costs of Equipment
4. Costs of Travel: Travel is permitted for the Research Fellow to present at a conference with a maximum of €2,000
5. Costs for Scientific information: Access to sources of scientific information include databases and publications
6. Costs for Open Access Publications: Publication Article Processing Charges are permitted for the Research Fellow to publish in open access journals with a maximum of €2,000
7. Costs for Other relevant activities: Additional operational costs directly associated with the project, such as expenses for dissemination activities.
8. Costs for Subcontracting Activities

The total of Cost Items 2-8 funded through the Project shall not exceed €15,000 per Fellow per project.

The Economic Operator has the option to supplement this sum at their discretion. The Applicant must seek in advance written approval from the Economic Operator for expenditures exceeding the approved budget and such coverage of expenditure should not be assumed merely based on the Economic Operator's support or involvement in the Project.

The Applicant shall submit a breakdown of the budget within the application template for the R&I Project, aligning with the eligible costs as stipulated in these Guidelines and Regulations. Budget expenditure during the Project shall be per the pre-approved budget. Transfers of project funds between line items over the course of the project are acceptable if:

- i. Changes to the budget do not impact the fundamental purpose of the Project
- ii. Transfer of project funds is less than €3,000
- iii. Changes are effected following approval by the MCAST post-award Finance Manager

Any other amendments to the pre-approved budget shall require the prior written approval of the Post-Award Monitoring Panel.

The scheme can include a maximum of €30,000 per Research Fellow or cover up to 100% of the eligible project costs, whichever is less.

3.4 Total Fund Allocation

The fund is earmarked with a €150,000 for the Research Fellowship Scheme in the year 2024.

3.5 Timeframes

Issue Date	12 th March 2024
Deadline for Submission	16 th April 2024 at 23:59 (CET)
Evaluation Period*	Up to two (2) weeks following the 'Deadline for Submission' date
Date of Notification*	Up to one (1) week following the 'Evaluation Period' date
Signature of Employment Contract*	Up to one (1) week following the 'Date of Notification'
Project Start Date*	Up to one (1) week following the 'Signature of Employment Contract' date

*Subject to change.

4. Application Submission

The process for submitting, evaluating, and selecting Project Applications will be a single-stage procedure. This implies that once an application has been submitted, no modifications will be permitted. Additionally, requests from the Applicant to engage in negotiations regarding the content of the proposals after submission will be declined.

Applicants are required to submit all the following documentation:

1. A completed R&I Project Application Form in MS Word (.docx) format and a signed scanned copy,
2. A signed Letter of Support from each Economic Operator involved in the proposed Project,
3. A signed Letter of Support from each participating Academic/Management in the proposed Project, and
4. A Curriculum Vitae of the Applicant including relevant track records.

Proposals are to be submitted by emailing the EEP on:
researchfellowshipscheme@mcast.edu.mt

Queries relating to the Research Fellowship Scheme may be emailed to:
researchfellowshipscheme@mcast.edu.mt

Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete Application Form per these Guidelines and Regulations. For eligibility, the Application must be submitted by the specified deadline and include all required information and documentation. Applications that do not meet these criteria will not undergo evaluation.

The system may automatically reject large emails. Applicants are encouraged to utilise cloud storage or mass file transfer systems (e.g., WeTransfer). While every received application will be acknowledged via email, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the successful transmission of application documents.

5. Evaluation

5.1 Conditions for Evaluation

- To be evaluated, Applications must satisfy all Eligibility Criteria as detailed in section 3.
- Only complete applications shall be evaluated.

5.2 Evaluation Criteria

The EEP shall base its decision upon the following criteria:

1. Scientific Excellence (40%): Threshold 25%

- Assesses the current state-of-play and the innovative contribution to addressing current issues through applied research.
- Assessment focuses on clear overall aim and objectives and whether these are reasonable within the program's context.
- Scrutinizes the clarity of scientific foundations and research methodologies outlined in the proposal, focusing on the development or use of novel concepts, methodologies, and technologies.
- Evaluates the innovative nature of the research, its potential to challenge existing norms, and the likelihood of leading to new discoveries.

Proposals not meeting the 25% threshold are ineligible for further evaluation of the next section.

2. Impact (30%): Threshold 20%

- Assesses whether the proposal addresses National, European Union, or Global Priorities.
- Evaluates how the research influences and impacts the Economic Sector of relevance to the Economic Operator, end-users, and society.
- Considers the proposal's outline of potential impacts resulting from dissemination measures, including detailed descriptions of journal publications and their open-access nature.
- Seeks a plan for subsequent research in the event of favourable results.

Proposals failing to meet the 20% threshold are ineligible for further evaluation of the next section.

3. Implementation (30%): Threshold 20%

- Assesses the Applicant's skills and expertise for successful project execution.
- Examines if the MCAST Academic/Management and representative of the Economic Operator' skills and resources complement those of the applicant.
- Evaluates the robustness of the proposed research approach.
- Evaluates the suitability, consistency, and effectiveness of the work plan, considering the allocation of deliverables and milestones.
- Verifies appropriateness of the requested budget in alignment with the proposal's objectives and work programme.
- Ensures potential Project risks are described and examines the proposed mitigating measures for managing risks to enhance the likelihood of successful research outcomes.

6. Evaluation Process

This scheme operates on a competitive basis and shall be evaluated per the above specified evaluation criteria and their respective weights.

The EEP will evaluate and award eligible applications. Evaluation and funding decisions shall depend on the quality of the submitted applications and the availability of the funds.

MEYR may decide not to allocate the total funds available for a particular call if the proposed projects do not reach the required level in terms of the evaluation criteria.

7. Project Implementation and Monitoring

An Agreement shall be signed between MEYR, the MCAST, and the Economic Operator(s) before the commencement of the Project.

Successful candidates shall be employed on a part-time basis with the College as a Research Fellow. They shall be required to sign the standard MCAST employment contract for this position. Employment shall be conditional on satisfactory progress on the Project being achieved.

The salary for the Research Fellow shall be paid from these funds, and the Fellow shall be able to procure eligible Cost items in line with the approved Project budget and per the normal MCAST procurement regulations.

The Fellow(s) engaged in the Project must submit to Post-Award Monitoring Panel periodic reports (every three months) and a Final Report within one month of the Project's conclusion. This report shall include:

- A comprehensive account of the activities undertaken during the Project.
- Details on the deliverables, milestones, and achieved results.
- A compilation of publications, patent applications, and dissemination events.
- A financial report, collaboratively prepared with the MCAST post-award Finance Manager.
- Any pertinent supporting documentation.

MEYR reserves the right to audit the finances relating to any of the projects.

8. Intellectual Property and Dissemination of Results

8.1 Intellectual Property (IP)

The R&I Project shall be carried out in collaboration between the Research Fellow, the MCAST and the Economic Operator(s). Any IP rights arising from the R&I Project shall be owned by the MCAST. However, MCAST retains the option to enter into co-ownership arrangements with the Applicant and the Economic Operator. If any Background IP belonging to any of these parties is required for execution of the Project, such IP shall remain the exclusive property of that party, who shall grant the other parties access rights to the Background IP on a non-exclusive, royalty-free basis for the sole purpose of carrying out the Project. The party receiving the access rights to the IP shall keep the information received confidential.

8.2 Dissemination of Results

Any outcomes arising from the R&I Project will be shared by the parties, with the condition that any Background IP remains confidential unless the owner consents in writing to its disclosure. Before publishing results, written consent must be obtained from all involved parties to ensure no inclusion of Background IP or commercially sensitive information. If a party objects to a particular publication, discussions will be held promptly to address the objections, such as modifying the planned publication. The objecting party should not unduly persist in opposition if appropriate measures are taken following the discussion.

8.3 Publicity

MEYR promotes widespread publicity and dissemination of project outcomes through publications and events designed for both specialists in the Economic Sectors and the general public.

The Research Fellow is responsible for providing MEYR and MCAST with copies of pertinent publications and any marketing, publicity, or informational material developed in connection with the Project.

Any dissemination in relation to the Project shall acknowledge MEYR for its financial support.

Any articles and textual content released regarding the fulfilment of tasks outlined in the project must incorporate the statement:

‘Project <Project Name> financed by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation.

Additionally, any events, websites, or printed materials associated with the project should feature the Ministry logo, the MCAST logo, the Economic Operators logo, and any other logo linked to this scheme, as supplied by MEYR, wherever feasible.

9. Complaint procedure

All complaints will be treated with confidentiality.

9.1 Grounds for Complaints

Applicants have the right to submit a complaint regarding procedural anomalies and irregularities observed in the submission and evaluation process, following the procedures stipulated in these Guidelines and Regulations. Complaints cannot be made pertaining to:

- The Government’s policies and procedures.
- The merits of the application as per the criteria stipulated in these Guidelines and Regulations.

Only Applicants are eligible to file complaints specifically related to their respective Projects.

9.2 Filing a Complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing and shall be articulated with utmost clarity. The complainant is required to delineate the grounds and reasons for the complaint, presenting a comprehensive explanation and justification. This should be supported by relevant documentation or testimonials, illustrating why the complainant believes that irregularities occurred in the procedure/s stipulated in these Guidelines and Regulations or in adherence to standard good governance rules and regulations governing the public sector. Complaints must be directed to the Permanent Secretary (MEYR) within five (5) working days of receipt of the EEP's communication regarding the funding decision for the Project Application.

If Applicants remain dissatisfied with the response, the Permanent Secretary (MEYR) will convene a Complaints Board to delve into the specific complaint. By submitting a complaint, Applicants acknowledge that information related to the Applicant's Project may be used to address the complaint. The decision of the Complaints Board shall be final.

10. Dispute Resolution

The parties involved in a Project are expected to make reasonable efforts to amicably resolve any disputes amongst themselves. If, despite these efforts, a resolution cannot be reached, the parties must escalate the dispute to the attention of the Permanent Secretary (MEYR). The Permanent Secretary will then convene a meeting with the parties to attempt mediation and resolve the dispute. If mediation proves unsuccessful, MEYR reserves the right to terminate the Project. In such cases, MCAST is obliged to return any unutilised funds received for the Project to MEYR.