

Instructions for IMMUFELLOW Reviewers 2025



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**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

IMMUFELLOW Reviewer Quick Guide (2025)

1. Purpose of the Review

Each application is evaluated by three independent reviewers to ensure a fair, transparent, and high-quality selection process according to the MSCA COFUND rules. The comments will be sent to the applicant, but your identity will not be disclosed.

2. Your Tasks

Please, use the IMMUFELLOW Evaluation Form to complete all required sections (additional instructions are included directly on the form) to provide:

- ✓ Numerical scores (0–5; one decimal) for each three main criteria
- ✓ Written comments under each sub-item (at least one sentence is needed)
- ✓ A separate overall statement (strengths and weaknesses)
- ✓ Ethical assessment comments scored in go/no-go phases

3. Main Evaluation Criteria and Their Weighting

Excellence (50%)

Applicant's qualifications, achievements, and international standing
 Originality, ambition, and scientific quality of the project
 Soundness of methodology, including interdisciplinarity, gender/diversity dimensions, and open science
 Quality of supervision and institutional environment

Impact (30%)

Scientific and scholarly impact
 Contribution to applicant's career development
 Societal and economic relevance
 Dissemination, communication, and exploitation potential

Quality and Efficiency of Implementation (20%)

Feasibility and coherence of the work plan
 Risk assessment and mitigation
 Appropriate resource allocation
 Suitability of host institution and planned secondments
 Feasibility within the 36-month fellowship period

Score Scale (0–5)

- 5 – Excellent: No improvements needed
- 4 – Very good: Minor improvements possible
- 3 – Good: Some elements require improvement
- 2 – Satisfactory: Substantial improvements needed
- 1 – Poor: Major weaknesses
- 0 – Failed: Does not address the criterion

Funding Threshold for Overall Research Score

- ≥70% → considered for funding (depending on available positions)
- <70% → rejected



Guidelines for Reviewers

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Guidelines for Reviewers

1. Using the Evaluation Form

Reviewers must use the electronic IMMUFELLOW evaluation form in Webropol to assess applications. Instructive guidance is provided directly on the form.

Applicants were requested to follow the CV template (max. 2 pages) and not include photos or other personal identifiers; if such information was nevertheless included in the CV, it must be disregarded and must not influence the evaluation, and applicants' personal details and doctoral certificates (or equivalent proof of PhD completion) were not shared with external reviewers to prevent potential bias. Before starting the evaluations, reviewers are requested to complete a short online briefing and self-evaluation form covering UTU/ÅAU/Finnish review policies and equity/non-discrimination awareness.

2. Scoring System

The IMMUFELLOW scoring system provides a thorough and equitable assessment of each proposal and aligns with the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship scoring framework.

During the review process, scientific quality is assessed based on three main criteria:

1. Excellence
2. Impact
3. Quality and Efficiency of Implementation

Each of these criteria includes specific sub-criteria that enable a comprehensive and holistic evaluation. This approach ensures careful consideration of academic strengths (merits), societal and economic implications, and the practical feasibility of the proposed research (methodological robustness; feasibility and suitability of the research environment), with particular attention to interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

3. Required Scores and Written Feedback

Reviewers are required to provide:

- Numerical scores for each of the three main criteria
- Written comments under each criterion
- A separate, integrated overall statement summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal
- Ethical issues, if needed

Reviewers are strongly encouraged to prioritise evaluative over descriptive comments.

4. Ethical Considerations

Reviewers must assess whether the proposal adequately addresses ethical dimensions, including issues that may not be explicitly stated.

Examples include:

- Bias
- Potential for maleficence
- Research involving vulnerable populations
- Lack of informed consent
- Inadequate data protection
- Weaknesses in the data management plan



5. Conflict of Interest

Before beginning the review, please carefully consider whether any conflict of interest exists.

Reviewers must disqualify themselves if they could benefit from the approval or rejection of a proposal, or if any of the following apply:

- Close collaboration with the applicant within the past 3 years (e.g., co-authorship, involvement in preparing the application, or participation in exploitation of results)
- Supervisory, subordinate, or instructor relationship with the applicant
- Concurrent application to the same post
- Close personal relationship (e.g., close friend, spouse, partner, child, sibling)

Reviewers must also recuse themselves if impartiality may otherwise be compromised.

Please note that assessor disqualification is governed by Sections 27–29 of the Finnish Administrative Procedure Act (<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2003/en20030434>).

6. Detailed Evaluation Criteria

6.1 Criteria for Evaluating the Excellence of the Applicant and Research Project:

- **Excellence:** Evaluators will balance the applicant's qualifications and the project's scientific merit, considering both equally. A strong applicant can enhance a borderline project and vice versa, leaving room for evaluators' discretion in the final assessment.
- **Quality of the Applicant at the International Level:** The overall quality and impact of the applicant's research outputs, considering international collaborations, conference presentations, and alignment with international standards, as outlined in the European Charter for Researchers.
- **Record of Activities:** Includes teaching, supervision, knowledge transfer, public outreach, and innovation, in accordance with DORA recommendations and the Charter's emphasis on diverse academic and non-academic roles.
- **Engagement in International Networks:** The applicant's involvement in international collaborations is consistent with the Charter's focus on mobility and international cooperation.
- **Confirmation of Recognition for Academic Excellence:** Recognition through awards, funding, and other accolades, reflecting diverse forms of achievements as per DORA and the Charter.
- **Originality and Innovation:** The project's uniqueness, ambition, and innovation, including its potential to advance or challenge current knowledge and methodologies.
- **Theoretical and Methodological Robustness:** The relevance of the proposed theoretical framework and research methods, including interdisciplinary approaches, gender dimensions, diversity aspects, and open science practices.
- **Quality of Collaborations and External Activities:** The relevance and contribution of proposed partners, supervisors, and external activities, with an explicit emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

6.2 Criteria for Evaluating the Impact:

- **Scientific Impact:** The project's contribution to advancing knowledge in its field, including the potential for ground-breaking discoveries and methodological advancements.

- **Researcher Development and Career Impact:** The project's potential to enhance the applicant's professional growth, including the development of new skills, research independence, and overall career advancement.
- **Social Impact:** The project's relevance and benefits to society, including how it addresses social challenges, contributes to public policy, improves quality of life, and engages the public through dissemination and outreach.
- **Economic Impact:** The project's potential economic benefits, such as fostering innovation, creating commercial opportunities, and influencing industry practices.

6.3 Quality and Efficiency of Implementation:

- **Risk/Gain Balance:** The project's ability to balance feasibility with potential risks and gains, with an emphasis on risk management.
- **Methodological Coherence:** The coherence, effectiveness, and thoroughness of the project's methodological framework and work plan.
- **Resource Allocation and Management:** The appropriateness of task distribution, resource allocation, and the adequacy of the management structure, including risk mitigation strategies.
- **Institutional and Secondment Complementarity:** The suitability of the institutional infrastructure and the relevance of secondments to the project, ensuring that the resources and environment are conducive to successful implementation.
- **Project Duration Feasibility:** The likelihood of completing the project within the 36-month fellowship period.

7. Scoring Scale and Weighting

Scores are assigned per main criterion excellence, impact and implementation (not per sub-criteria):

- 0–5, to one decimal place

Score Definitions

- **5 — Excellent:** Outstanding, internationally competitive; no improvements needed, exceptionally strong;
- **4 — Very good:** Minor improvements possible, strengths outweigh weaknesses;
- **3 — Good:** Some elements require improvement, reasonable but with some issues;
- **2 — Satisfactory:** Substantial revision needed, some weaknesses;
- **1 — Poor:** Major intrinsic weaknesses, significant weaknesses;
- **0 — Fails** or insufficient information and thus cannot be assessed

Weighting of criteria:

Criterion	Weight
Excellence	50%
Impact	30%
Quality and Efficiency of Implementation	20%

Calculation:

Final score will be calculated by IMMUFELLOW administration based on the individual scores.

Final Score (%) = (Excellence × 0.50) + (Impact × 0.30) + (Implementation × 0.20)

The final score will be expressed as a percentage out of **100%**.

8. Threshold for Funding Consideration

Proposals scoring **70% or higher** will be considered for funding **subject to availability of positions**. Proposals scoring **below this threshold** will be rejected.

9. Consensus Procedure

If there is a difference of 10 percentage points or more between individual reviewers' overall scores, a consensus meeting will be organised.

- The meeting includes the original reviewers
- One reviewer act as the rapporteur and prepares the Consensus Report
- The Selection Committee Chair or Vice-Chair may act as a facilitator, if needed

The Selection Committee ranks applicants based on aggregated scores.

Borderline cases may require a vote; in a tie, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) holds the casting vote.

10. Confidentiality

In Finland, the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999) applies. Review materials may contain personal data; reviewers must treat all materials confidentially, store them securely, use them solely for the purpose of evaluation, and delete/destroy all copies after completing the review, in accordance with GDPR.

Confidential documents include:

- Research plans
- Abstracts
- Evaluation statements
- CV

Reviewers and Selection Committee members must:

- Handle all documents with strict confidentiality
- Not disclose or use information for personal gain
- Not reveal that they are reviewing a specific applicant
- Direct any inquiries to the IMMUFELLOW Coordinator: Verna Louhivuori – vtlouh@utu.fi

After completing the evaluation:

- Reviewers must destroy all copies of application materials
- Confidentiality obligations continue indefinitely
- Applicants will receive anonymised evaluation statements after funding decision