Introduce and obtain a FRIA or FRESH PhD grant from the F.R.S.-FNRS

→ how to write your application
→ how to prepare your interview

July 2017
1. The F.R.S.-FNRS

Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique-FNRS (Scientific Research Fund)

Public foundation (86% financed by public savings)

It supports the development of fundamental scientific research in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB)
2. FRESH and FRIA grants

**FRESH**: *Fonds pour la Recherche en Sciences Humaines (Human Sciences Research Fund)*: it meets the different and complementary needs of the fundamental research in social and human sciences.

**FRIA**: *Fonds pour la Formation à la Recherche dans l’Industrie et dans l’Agriculture (Fund for Research Training in Industry and Agriculture)*: for PhD candidates who aim to develop their research career in the industry or agriculture.

Candidates cannot introduce applications within both schemes. The choice is imposed by the field of the obtains diploma giving access to the doctoral studies obtained. However, graduates in:
- Architecture and Spatial Planning
- Public Health Sciences
- Geographic Sciences
- Environmental Sciences and Management
- Psychology Sciences, biomedical discipline
may choose which grant (FRESH or FRIA) they would like to apply for

**3 grant types exist:**
- 1st grant 1st year: for those who have not yet started their PhD or have been working on their doctoral thesis for less than 12 months already
- 1st grant 2nd year: for PhD candidates who apply after one year of PhD
- 2nd year: only for those who have already been granted with a first FRESH or FRIA grant

July 2017
3. Regulatory and administrative information
## 3.1. Timing 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 July 2017</td>
<td>Call launch FRESH and FRIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 August</td>
<td>Application registration deadline (by the applicant and via SEMAPHORE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Preselection of FRESH applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Oct - 10 Nov</td>
<td>Interviews FRIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - 15 Nov</td>
<td>Interviews FRESH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>Final decisions (FNRS Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 2017</td>
<td>Retroactive* scholarship start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(except for grantees who like their fellowship to start after 1st of Oct)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Even if the FNRS accepts a starting date after October, the grant period shall not be extended by the number of months that were realised before the grant was given.
3.2. The promoter and the copromoter

The promoter must be a member of one of the universities of the French-speaking community of Belgium

The promoter must be permanently appointed or on probation (equivalent to a permanent appointment) in that university at the latest by the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (rectors) (7th (FRIA) & 14th (FRESH) of September)

If the promoter will retire/ becomes professor emeritus after the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (Rectors) and before the end of the granting scheme in case of granting, seek the approval of the Head of institution (contact Mrs. P. Blanchard)

The permanently appointed promotor who will retire/ become professor emeritus before the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (Rectors) is not eligible..

The copromoter must be a member of one of the institutions listed in appendix 1 of each “Regulations”
### 3.3. Appendices

#### 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} grants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics forms</td>
<td>31/10/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1\textsuperscript{st} grants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Template for academic marks and rankings (the ad hoc document is sent by the FNRS at the end of August and must be completed by the faculty awarding the master degree which is taken into account for the eligibility)</td>
<td>30/09/2017, 2 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate of achievement or a copy of the Master diploma(s) and, if necessary, registration document or certificate enabling the admission to doctoral programmes</td>
<td>30/09/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference letters (referees will be contacted by the FNRS)</td>
<td>30/09/2017</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 2\textsuperscript{nd} grants (renewal):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>To Be Sent To:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>document signed by the thesis advisory committee</td>
<td>Mrs. P. Blanchard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.4. Enrolment at the ULiege

→ For insurance reasons, it is necessary to register with the University if your fellowship starts on 01/10/2017

Holders of a foreign degree who apply for a PhD fellowship must complete the online form BEFORE 16 AUGUST in order to obtain the necessary documents for their application to a doctoral grant.
3.5. PhD tuition fees

No tuition fees for F.R.S.-FNRS grantees!

In the event of obtaining the grant scholarship, it is possible to claim the refund of the tuition fees

Those who have enrolled before the FRESH/FRIA results, who have not been granted the scholarship and do not wish to continue their PhD, may apply for a refund of their tuition fees

For refund claim applications, please complete the online form before 15/01/2018
4. Selection procedure
4.1. Preselection FRESH

**FRESH:**

1. Each application is reviewed by 4 jury members chosen by the applicant. They review the application individually. Their outcome leads to the preselection of the files according to:
   - the scientific quality of the application (both project and applicant)
   - the societal impact of the research project (10%)

2. Interview with preselected applicants

**FRIA:** interviews are held with all the applicants
4.2. The juries

**FRIA**: Jury committees are formed around 19 subject areas. Each jury is made up of 1 non-academic member from a research center or an expert from the industry sector, plus 6 or 8 members from FWB universities *(2 ULiege members per committee)*

The FRIA grant applicant chooses:

- The desired subject area for the evaluation of his/her file + descriptor fields (key words)
  - -> the jury Presidents accepts or not the topic
- The jury within the chosen theme
  - -> FRIA reserves the right to assign the applicant to another jury

**FRESH**: 2 juries: ‘cultural challenges’ and ‘economic and social challenges’. Each jury is made up of 3 civil society representatives, plus 9 members from FWB universities *(2 ULiege members per committee)*

The FRESH applicant selects the jury himself

- -> General remark: make a strategic choose: have a look at the competencies of the jury members and choose your committee according to its composition.

4.3. Criteria and process

FNRS announced criteria:

• Quality of the research project: feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan, societal impact and activity report + *societal impact (FRESH)*

• Competencies of the applicant with respect to his/her specialty (CV)

• Presentation and answers given to questions about the project

• Scientific knowledge in general

Before the interview, each dossier is entrusted to a rapporteur, according to the descriptive elements and the keywords that the applicant indicated in his/her application form.
A specific feature of the **FRESH** fund is the societal impact of the research projects that are selected for funding: "The FRESH Fund supports basic research projects whose outcomes are likely to improve the understanding or functioning of one sector in the society in the short-medium term at a local, regional, national or international level, from many perspectives such as economy, politics, culture, etc.”

**Candidates for a FRESH grant must provide:**

- a justification of the potential societal impact of their project in their application file, highlighting the players, groups or sectors that are likely to benefit from the results of the research in the short-medium term
- the contact details of a referee outside the academic sphere who will be contacted by the FNRS to provide a reference letter (the applicant does **not** have to include it him-/herself in SEMAPHORE)

The societal impact is taken into account in the pre-selection (10% weighting)

**Additionally, candidates for a FRIA grant can (but must not) provide:**

- the justification of the potential societal impact of their project in their application file, highlighting the players, groups or sectors that are likely to benefit from the results of the research in the short-medium term
- In case of short term industrial or agronomic approach and prospects: the contact details of 2 referees from the industry and/or agriculture sectors who will be contacted by the FNRS in order to provide a reference letter (the candidate does **not** have to include the letters him-/herself in SEMAPHORE)
4.5. Ethics

*experiments or samples on human beings/material?*

*animal experiments?*

*ethical issues related to Human Sciences?*

-> Fill in the appropriate FNRS ethic form and send it to the FNRS together with, *if necessary*, the decision of the relevant Ethics Committee

-> If the applicant and the promotor think that the relevant Ethics Committee should validate the project, please get in touch with it *ASAP* (and by the end of August at the very latest).
5. The application file
5.1. Pre-form and form sections

Applicants submit their application online, either in French or in English, through SEMAPHORE, the management platform dedicated to calls for proposals.

Pre-form sections:
- personal data
- Eligibility check related data

Form sections:
- The researcher
- The research project
- The work environment
- The referees
5.2. Form sections

THE RESEARCHER

• Administrative details (eligibility of the request)
• PhD promoter, co-promoter, cotutelle (joint PhD) : co-promotion and cotutelle are to be considered if the project is interdisciplinary or if the research environments are complementary
• Academic track record: prior awards and honours
• Master thesis: the rapporteur reads it and might ask the applicants questions about it
• Possible publications (published or accepted)
• Professional experience
• Research stays abroad: might have an added-value

-> Prior research experience is considered a plus in your application!
5.2. Form sections

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

- Organisation of the PhD
- Title, summary, keywords, choice of jury and descriptor fields, ethical issues
  - Choose the most pertinent jury
- Description of the project (see next slide)
- Applicants to a 1st year grant, 2nd year: activities report concerning the first PhD year
- Societal value of the project
- Monthly work plan of the planned research activities
5.2. Form sections

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: description of the project

4 pages maximum (6 if charts, graphs & tables are added), organized in 4 parts: goals of the research, state of the art, research project, work plan – do not exceed the max. authorized number of pages!!

The research project must be clear, coherent, unambiguous and equally ambitious, original, concise and feasible. You need to introduce a real research question and well-substantiated hypotheses.

Warning! Even if the project is ‘applied’ and addresses (FRESH obligatory) societal – industrial - agronomical impact issues, it should still address fundamental research.

Introduce a specific schedule which is particularly highlighting the first 2 years. You might think of adding a Gantt chart (see next slide).

Integrate the question to be answered in the project title.

Questions about the chosen methodology are part of the interview: be as precise as possible and be able to justify your methodology choice.
## 5.2. Form sections

### THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Gantt chart example

#### Time schedule FRESH-FRIA 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-selection based on the application files</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews FRIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews FRESH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding decisions (Board of Trustee of the FRIA and Management Committee of the FRESH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start of the scholarships</td>
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*July 2017*
5.2. Form sections

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Facts that assess whether the environment (the intellectual means and/or equipment available to the applicant) is consistent with achieving the aims of the project

-> It must be carefully described, relevant and answer the required multidisciplinary expertise needs of certain projects (work with a co-supervisor in the case your project is an interdisciplinary project). You should demonstrate that the environment will allow you to obtain research results that cannot be obtained elsewhere.

The research environment must provide the experimental means that are necessary for the project

THE REFEREES

Contact details of 2 referees other than the promoter who will be contacted by the FNRS and invited to write a reference letter (the applicant does not have to include these letters him-/herself in SEMAPHORE). The letters will highlight the quality of the applicant and of his/her application

Contact details of 1 or 2 referees outside the academic sphere who will be contacted by the FNRS and invited to write a letter of reference (the candidate does not have to include these letters him-/herself in SEMAPHORE):

• for a FRESH application: 1 referee
• for a FRIA application: 2 referees from the industry and/or agriculture sectors, only for short-term applications within the FRIA scheme

→ Explain to the referees which task the FNRS will ask them to perform and ensure that the suggested FNRS timing fits their agenda

These letters are important and carefully read by the jury members
6. The interview

The oral examination takes place at the F.R.S.-FNRS premises and is based on the research project (feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan and activities report, if applicable), the applicant’s profile with regard to their specialty (C.V.), his/ her presentation and the answers given to questions regarding the research project, and his/ her scientific knowledge in general.

[Excerpt of the F.R.S.-FNRS rules]
6.1. Preparation: the PowerPoint

- highly recommended, almost obligatory

Well-structured, concise, without typos, PDF

- Just some -modest- slides:
  - title
  - context
  - goals
  - main research axes
  - possible readjustments (in case you present your application a second time)
  - Societal impact (FRESH), industrial or agronomic approach and prospects (FRIA)

- + many ‘joker’ slides: work plan, dissertation results, additional information, specific characteristics of the used material, schemes + methodology, possible short or mid-term applications, recent publications...
6.2. Goal of the interview

Persuade the jury committee to select you because of:

• The originality of your project

• Your skills and competencies regarding the topic and its methodology: it’s your project, not that of your supervisor or your team

• Its feasability within 4 years

-> The quality of the project incontestably is the main criterium for the jury members
6.3. The interview: how it works

Duration: 20 > 30 minutes

In French or English, depending on your choice

1. Welcome address (by the jury)
2. Your presentation (3 > 10 min FRIA, 10 min FRESH)
3. Questions-answers session. The applicant is mainly questioned by the rapporteur who is the main investigator
6.4. Some ‘tips and tricks’

- Be punctual
- **Be polite** (introduce yourself –without shaking hands!–, thank the committee for their time and commitment...)
- **Mind your manners**: dress up, mind your -upright- position, make eye contact with all the jury members
- Be honest: no bluffing!
- **Be organised** (mind your material: USB key, pointer, dissertation copy...)
6.5. Your attitude

- Be **dynamic**
- Convince people of your motivation
- Don’t be shy, reply!
- Be **free, open**
- Show that you possess the right competencies and quality to master your project
6.6. Your presentation

- 3 up to 10-20 min, depending on the jury
  → mind about possible shortcuts and/or additional material

- Never turn your back to the jury members to read your slides

- Interruptions can happen throughout your presentation, for questions or because your presentation is too long
  → ‘keep on rolling’ (don’t let anyone distract you)
6.7. The questions

• Reporter questions: he/she is the person that reads your proposal, your Master thesis and the bibliography. He/she will ask you questions.

• The other members: may ask very broad questions although the topic is a very narrowed-down

→ **be prepared for naive questions!**

• Questions might distract, disturb or emotionally affect you. Remember there’s not always strategy behind!

Try to make the jury members interact and be part of your presentation dynamics, try to establish a dialogue.
6.8. The questions: how to answer?

- Reply, defend if necessary, but never aggressively nor arrogantly.
- Try to convince the whole selection panel (which might be of a very heterogeneous kind).
- If you don’t know the answer: stay honest (and show that you know where the answer to the question could be found:)

..be able to explain and justify each single word of your application; be able to answer concrete questions/questions about prior research stays; be able to explain the price of e.g. testing samples; be able to explain why an important reference is lacking in the bibliography; present the doctoral training that you will enrol in; in case you present an interdisciplinary project: demonstrate that the environment will enable you to carry it out...
## 7. Results 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>Nb of applications</th>
<th>Nb of awarded fellowships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federation Wallonia-Brussels</td>
<td>ULiège</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st grant FRESH</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st grant FRIA</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8. ULiege Contact

**Research Department**
Mrs. Patricia Blanchard
patricia.blanchard@ulg.ac.be
+32 4 366 55 86

**Bureau du 3e cycle**
*PhD Enrolment*
admission.phd@ulg.ac.be

**Registration service**
Refund claim applications (until 15/01/2018)
9. Useful links

FNRS

Mini-guide, règlements et guide des jurys FRESH et FRIA

SEMAPHORE