AQUARIUS Transnational Access Calls

Evaluation Criteria

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About this document

Title	Evaluation criteria for AQUARIUS Transnational Access call applications
Work Package	WP3, RI Call Design, Management, Evaluation and Access Platform
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1. Introduction

The AQUARIUS proposal evaluation system is based on evaluation structures, procedures and best practices from previous Transnational Access (TA) projects (e.g. EUROFLEETS 1, 2 & Plus; ARICE; INTERACCESS; JERICO and ASSEMBLE Plus).

Excellence-driven Access: The evaluation system of AQUARIUS, in which only scientifically excellent-ranked proposals are considered for the logistical evaluation, ensures that only excellent proposals are considered for funding.

2. The Scientific Evaluation

The submitted TA proposals are scientifically evaluated by external, independent scientific experts, and AQUARIUS Scientific Expert Panel (SEP) members when appropriate.

a. **Selection of reviewers**
Eligible applications are allocated to SEP members with the respective expertise. The SEP members assist the AQUARIUS Call Management Office in finding external reviewers for the TA proposals. The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public. Evaluators are required to declare NO conflict of interest and must agree to the AQUARIUS confidentiality clause before reviewing their assigned AQUARIUS TA proposals.

b. **Individual assessment**
Eligible applications are evaluated by at least two external evaluators, and a member of the SEP, if required. Evaluators are chosen in mutual agreement by the SEP and the Call Management Office.

The reviewers must assess the application framework, the research plan and the CV. The initial DMP is not part of the scientific evaluation.

The experts assess the application(s) assigned to them and score and comment on each of the **Evaluation Criteria** (see paragraph 4 below) using dedicated **Assessment Form**, which is embedded in the AQUARIUS TA Platform.

The individual assessment criteria are weighted differently (paragraph 4). The ranking of the applications in the consensus assessment is based on the total number of points that the applications have received for the criteria.

c. **Consensus Evaluation**
After the individual evaluation, the SEP meets in person or online for a consensus evaluation and draws up a **ranking list of proposals and a shortlist of user groups recommended for funding.** Evaluators justify their marks with constructive comments. The SEP will agree on an overall Consensus Feedback: All applicants, whether successful or unsuccessful, will be given feedback on the outcome of the evaluation.

The proposals recommended for implementation are then ranked according to their total score and recommended for implementation or rejection.

Logistic evaluation

After the final recommendation by the SEP, high ranked proposals will be examined by the AQUARIUS Operational Expert Panel (OEP) to determine the logistical feasibility of the proposed work. The OEP will aim at optimising the use of infrastructure time and associated costs. The decisions are finalised by the Research Infrastructure managers, based on the recommendations from the SEP and OEP.

3. Evaluation criteria

Access to any infrastructure in AQUARIUS will be regulated according to the excellence-driven access mode[1]. This mode of access is dependent on the scientific excellence, originality, quality and technical and ethical feasibility of an application evaluated by international experts. In this way, AQUARIUS ensures that only scientifically excellent proposals are considered for funding.

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[1] European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, doi:10.2777/524573

Eligible proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria.

Criteria	Weighting
1) Scientific quality of the planned research • Is the general scientific background well described and challenges clearly identified? • Is the proposed topic of high scientific relevance, is it innovative? • Are the research objectives clearly stated?	30%
2) Quality of the work plan • Is the work plan clearly described and are the scheduled tasks and methods adequate to the set objectives? • Is the work plan feasible considering resources and time? • Are potential risks and contingency plans well addressed?	20%
3) Scientific impact and challenges • Is the expected scientific impact well addressed? • Is the proposed research/topic contribute to addressing at least one of the requested call themes and challenges (AQUARIUS Deliverable 3.3 and website)? • Is the proposed project embedded into larger research programmes on a national, EU or international level? Is international collaboration envisaged?	10%
4) Composition and scientific competence of the user-group leader and user-group • Is the background/track record of the user group leader related to his/her career stage sound enough? • Are the roles and responsibilities of the user team clearly stated? • Do early career researchers have a clearly identified role and is there appropriate training for early career researchers? • Does the user group contain diversity in nationalities, gender and in different stages of their scientific careers?	15%
5) Technical capability • Is all necessary equipment requested and available to carry out the proposed project? • Are logistical needs and research permits clearly identified? • Is an appropriate number of relevant infrastructures meaningfully integrated into the proposal?	10%
6) Data exploitation and dissemination • Is a clear plan presented how the gathered data will be managed, analysed and published? • Does the data management comply to open science practices? • Are the proposed dissemination and outreach activities during and after the campaign adequate?	15%

All evaluation criteria receive a score of 1-5 each.
Applicants have to ensure that sufficient information is provided in the proposal to enable a thorough evaluation of all criteria.

4. Selection priorities

The selection of user groups is based on scientific excellence. The SEP will apply the principles of transparency, fairness and impartiality.
Collaborative applications from teams and institutions where no equivalent research infrastructure exist, collaboration with vulnerable groups such as researchers from Ukraine and researchers with refugee status, and the inclusion of female, young and early career scientists, as well as a strong training aspect in the project are strongly encouraged. International and/or industrial partners are welcome.

Priority should be given to user groups composed of users who:
- have not previously used the installation and
- are working in countries where no equivalent research infrastructure exist.