



D13.2 – ARQUS HANDBOOK ON JOINT CALLS

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arQus
European University Alliance

ARQUS HANDBOOK

Designing Joint Calls



arqus-alliance.eu



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01. INTRODUCTION

As defined in the Mission Statement of the Alliance, Arqus centres its primary interest on people and on developing a joint identity and a sense of belonging to the Alliance through a culture of collaboration among its diverse university communities of students, academics, and technical and administrative staff.

Arqus initiatives organised by joint working groups seek to create instruments that benefit Arqus institutions from mutual experience and good practices, and also to help develop this joint identity. In order to publicise and promote the activities, foster student and staff participation and guarantee fair and transparent selection of participants, Arqus institutions have agreed to establish joint calls, following a structured scheme associated with a formal, transparent, well-documented procedure, easily recognised by the prospective participants.

This Handbook is intended to provide Arqus members with an instrument to develop joint calls for participation in jointly designed and fully integrated Arqus Alliance activities and also to make the offer of respective funding schemes available.

Joint selection procedures may contribute to fairer and more transparent administrative processes not only within each participating institution, but also externally. This transparency, together with the understanding of common objectives, will develop a sense of belonging to a larger institutional and educational initiative and community.

This Handbook responds to a need to standardise, helping our institutions to spare effort in drafting separate application and selection procedures, and to avoid any lack of consistency, while enhancing the visibility of joint initiatives, leading to a greater integration of procedures and regulations within the Alliance.

It results from the first joint calls under the Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund and Innovation Fund, team discussions, inspired by examples and good practices from the participating institutions.

02. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of joint calls within the Alliance are to create incentives for universities to work together on joint initiatives and projects and to strengthen collaboration. This should enable them to exploit internal and external funding together and to pool and expand common resources such as IT and communication media. Joint calls encourage new innovative formats in, for instance, the areas of digitalisation, entrepreneurship, learning, teaching, research and societal engagement. Another objective is to promote internationalisation and mobility between partner universities and to involve different target groups, promoting diversity and inclusion within the university community.

Specific objectives and possible actions to be funded will vary according to the target group(s) of the specific call, and may include for example:

- ✔ Joint calls addressed to undergraduate and postgraduate students: the aim can be to enhance student engagement, to consolidate the community, or to support students' personal and professional development through, for instance, joint scholarships, joint short-term study projects, student co-designed projects, joint academic activities as well as mentorship programmes. Furthermore, calls may be an opportunity to promote the participation of disadvantaged groups, or to attract global talents.
- ✔ Joint calls addressed to academic staff: the aim can be to bring together different teaching methods and enable academics to share best practices, pool skills through the exchange of professional expertise and share resources, thus promoting deeper research collaboration. Possible actions are research training, researcher mobility, transition initiatives, joint conferences, joint dissemination activities, jointly developed teaching activities or joint application support, challenge-based learning programmes, collaboration project labs, cross-disciplinary seminars and joint workshops. A special target group are early-stage researchers. Synergies between education and research should be actively sought.
- ✔ Joint calls addressed to non-academic staff: these activities provide opportunities for networking and new perspectives on workflows and processes. Joint calls can take the form of communities of practice, joint workshops, staff weeks, job shadowing, or joint training programmes.



03. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

Special care needs to be paid to identifying and ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations. Typically, these may include, depending on the source of funding and internal regulations:

- ✓ Specific rules of the Erasmus+ Programme, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, or any other European programme awarding funding for Arqus activities, including any applicable updates in operating rules. Careful attention should be paid to the terms of the corresponding Grant Agreement and/or Programme Guide.
- ✓ EU funding regulations, in particular and where applicable avoiding double funding, requirements for financial support to third parties, eligibility of activities, terms of incompatibility and so forth.
- ✓ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR).
- ✓ Specific rules regarding national or regional funding, where applicable.
- ✓ Alliance member universities' own institutional rules and regulations on:
 - ✓ Access, inclusion, admissions and continuance standards.
 - ✓ International mobility.
 - ✓ Financial management.
 - ✓ Procedures for open calls, appeals and so on.
- ✓ National and/or regional regulations specific to the countries or regions of the Alliance member universities relating, for example to:
 - ✓ Public universities and their functioning.
 - ✓ Public subsidies.
 - ✓ Public sector.

Remember also to take into account the various internal procedures required at each member university prior to the publication of a call: approval from legal services, from internal audit offices, etc. In some cases, these may require some time which should be taken into account in the planning of the calendar.

Additionally, other regulatory aspects must be specified in the different sections of the call, such as:

- ✓ The legitimacy of the members of the selection committees.
- ✓ The responsible authority for deciding on appeals.
- ✓ The form of validation of the identity of applicants. Remember that the recognition of electronic signatures from different countries is still often an issue. Clarity is needed on which institutional identification should be used.
- ✓ Country- or region-specific legal limitations regarding time limits for applications, appeals and decisions.

04. FUNDING RULES & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This section outlines important issues regarding funding rules and financial management you should bear in mind when preparing a joint call.

As a general approach, the following steps are recommended:

1. Familiarisation with the funding source.
2. Discussion in the working group about institutional framework guidelines, payment mechanisms, etc.
3. Discussion in working group of financial regulations and funding rules.
4. Assignment of roles and responsibilities.



4.1. FUNDING RULES



4.1.1. Familiarisation with the funding source

First and foremost, check the funding options for the planned joint call. Arqus is currently funded by the Erasmus+ programme, the Horizon 2020 programme, Digital Europe, as well as several national and regional governments. Each source has its own rules and regulations, and eligibility requirements. For instance, there may be incompatibility of Arqus funds for scholarships with other European or national programmes. This should be contemplated both in the Call for Applications / Application process and in the acceptance or process following selection. In general, Arqus scholarships cannot be combined with other EU-funded scholarships because of double funding, i.e., additional sources of funding (scholarships, grants) under the Erasmus+ programme would lead to a loss of the relevant Arqus scholarship due to the resulting double financing.

In a nutshell, before preparing a joint call, it is of utmost importance not only to establish the funding rules and organise financial management but also to familiarise yourself, and those involved in the development, deployment and monitoring of the call, with the conditions of the funding source, i.e., compatibility with other funds, double-financing, eligibility period, etc.

Note: these local specificities can sometimes be an advantage, as certain types of calls are likely to be managed more flexibly and efficiently by one partner than another.

IMPORTANT: make sure that all the funding rules are clear to all the partners when working on the call, and that they are also clear to potential applicants when opening the call. National regulations and those specific to each institution vary; it is therefore essential to ensure that open calls are compliant and applicable to all partners.



4.1.2. Discussion in the working group about institutional framework guidelines, payment mechanisms, etc.

For joint calls, all partners need to be involved in the discussion and preparation stage and provide information on legal regulations governing their institutions as well as internal procedures necessary for the development of the call. Since this information can be very comprehensive, make sure that you involve not only the participating members of the work package but also the right decision-makers, department(s) and other stakeholders, from all the institutions taking part, as well as other work packages with a similar approach.

A *Question Catalogue* for a scholarship scheme shall serve as a good practice example in this Handbook, in which the individual framework guidelines, payment mechanisms, amounts of tuition fees and options for tuition fee waivers at the individual Arqus universities, setting of scholarship amounts (e.g., uniform scholarship?), scope of the scholarship, grant agreements, etc. were collected as a first step. This *Question Catalogue* can be adapted to the purpose of the planned joint call and be found in the Annex VIII of the Handbook.



4.1.3. Discussion in working group of financial regulations and funding rules

This section is fairly technical and can be 'scary'. How many and how these rules apply should be adapted according to the call, the source of funding and the amounts involved. The section has been subdivided into types of call: scholarships, mobility, other initiatives/activities.

Scholarship schemes

Issues to be determined in the working group include: number of scholarships to be awarded, amounts awarded, form of payment (number of instalments: e.g., one payment every xy month), any conditions for the start of the scholarship as well as for second and further payments (e.g., academic performance, continuation of enrolment, etc.), the maximum duration of the scholarship, or the scope of the scholarship.

It is also of utmost importance to establish payment terms, together with criteria for renunciation and justification for the withdrawal or non-compliance, as well as interruption rules, and penalties, including repayment obligations. For instance, if the funding or scholarship is paid every month after the funding recipient has provided the required documents established, second and further payments are dependent on these requirements. Possible reimbursements may be either paid to the funding recipient directly or to the Arqus partner on receipt of the corresponding request for reimbursement and necessary documents such as payment confirmation, receipts/invoices, etc. It is also possible to establish additional or special funds based on commonly agreed criteria. Remember to agree on a maximum duration of the funding if applicable and where necessary.

It is recommended that any expenses incurred for transfers that are not SEPA compatible must be borne in full by the funding recipient. For information: The Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) enables cashless euro payments (by credit transfer or direct debit) throughout the European Union and in a number of non-EU countries in the same fast, secure and efficient way as national payments.



Moreover, the working group should establish when loss of entitlement to payment of the fund/scholarship occurs, alongside repayment obligations, e.g., if the student is not enrolled at the respective Arqus university, has received the funding/scholarship on the basis of incorrect or incomplete information, etc. In some universities, additional repayment obligations may apply, such as incompatibility of Arqus scholarships with employment contracts at the respective Arqus university. On the other hand, it is also possible that the funding recipient shall be entitled to a pro rata payment or must repay the funding/scholarship only proportionally in justified cases (e.g., illness, important family obligations, *force majeure*).

The working group should also discuss how responsibilities will be divided and assigned, i.e., who is responsible for the payments and how the money will be distributed among the partners. For instance, one university may be responsible for all payments to scholarship holders, or the funds may already be evenly distributed among all partners, with some sort of virtual credit allocated to selected projects/activities, requiring a financial breakdown per partner after xy month to potentially redistribute the funds.

Mobility

For the time being, as most mobility funds come from the funds allocated to each of our universities at national level by Erasmus+ agencies, there will not be many opportunities for joint calls for mobility. However, it is to be hoped that in the future instruments will be available to allow for joint calls and management of mobility at alliance level. For the meantime, joint calls will be limited to mobilities actually funded by the alliance, normally for short-term activities and only where the funds are centralised at one institution.

Mobility calls require that the working group carefully identifies requirements for participants (e.g., course and year for students, status and specialisation for staff), of selection criteria (academic record, language competence), alongside details of flows (e.g., origin and destination; lengths of stay; number of places). Obligations regarding e.g., registration, learning agreements etc., on the part of participants should be clearly outlined, as should those of the alliance and partner universities regarding payments, recognition of learning etc.. Deadlines, format and platforms for application submission should be clearly announced, as should any supporting documents required. As in any call, it is recommended to limit supporting documents to those truly necessary for the selection process.

Considerable attention should be paid to the eligibility of funding, especially regarding the risk of double funding, or limits on the number of fundable months. It should be made clear exactly what the funding is intended to cover, and what not. Special additional funding for under-represented groups should be contemplated where possible.

The institution responsible for making payments should be clearly indicated in each case.

Funding scheme for initiatives/activities

In the case of funded activities, clear funding rules should be established, such as who is responsible for paying the grant and monitoring the expenditure of each participating Arqus university or the prior review of internal regulations for payments at each university.

A report should also be required on the progress of the funded activities and may include a short 'news item' summarising key results achieved through the project, which can be used for dissemination purposes, and the expenditures of partners for follow-up monitoring meetings.

For the latter, it is helpful for everyone for the working group to provide a template for budget management (an example in the Annex VII). In the call, elements which should be made clear are: eligible activities, possible ceilings for smaller and larger projects, unit costs or lump sums for specific categories (e.g., organisational costs for online and on-site events, travel costs, subsistence allowance, facilitator costs per day, etc.).

Funded activities that are not developed and implemented within the deadlines established in the call lose the right to the funding, which should also be made clear in the call. Special cases (e.g., *force majeure*) might be considered.

Depending on the source of funding, unused funds may in turn be used for a follow-up call. Care should be taken to follow-up where unused funds are held, with a view to ensuring that any necessary transfers are made.



4.1.4. Assignment of roles & responsibilities

As mentioned on the previous page, the working group should also discuss how responsibilities will be divided and assigned, i.e., who is responsible for the payments and how the money will be distributed among the partners.

For instance, one university may be responsible for all payments to scholarship holders, or the funds may already be evenly distributed among all partners, with some sort of virtual credit allocated to selected projects/activities, requiring a financial breakdown per partner after xy month to potentially redistribute the funds.



4.2. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Generally speaking, it is essential to plan how the call will be managed from a financial point of view, before the call itself is opened, during the funded activities/scholarship and afterwards.

Several modes of financial management are possible, depending on the call and the way in which it will be implemented. Specify as early as possible whether management will be centralised (one university ensuring budgetary monitoring for all partners) or decentralised (each partner/selected candidate managing its own budget) as described in the previous chapter.

Whatever the relevant management method, it must always be consistent with the principles, conditions and objectives set out in the Grant Agreement. If necessary — as in the case of scholarships awarded for several years — an additional agreement may be concluded between the call organisers and the selected candidates.

To ensure that budget management is as detailed and accurate as possible, the development of budget monitoring tools — adapted to the nature of the activities funded, the amounts allocated, the budgetary rules, etc. — is essential. See, for example, the tool developed as part of the Arqus Innovation Fund call (Annex VII). In some cases, it may be necessary to manage both the overall budget of the Alliance and the budget allocated to each partner university. In these cases, it is essential that the actions are harmonised and that the management and monitoring tools are complementary in order to avoid missing information or, just as damaging, certain actions being carried out unnecessarily twice.

Organisers of the call should ensure that it runs smoothly both within the work package organising the call and in relation to the selected candidates/projects. Hence there is a need for coordination with the first and support for the latter through regular progress reports and/or meetings (the frequency of which will depend on the nature of the grant or activity funded). With this in mind, it must be made clear as soon as the call is published who will be in charge of financial management and how they can be contacted and approached.

As a good practice example, see the following excerpt of a table which can be used to identify the roles and responsibilities in terms of financial management. This table may be developed/expanded according to the specific features of each call and the responsibilities to be shared.

We recommend adjusting the time frame suggested depending on the scope of the call.

| WHAT? | BY WHOM? | WHEN? |
|--|---|---|
| Pre-award phase | | |
| Familiarisation of the funding source | Lead for call + team/work package organising the call | As soon as work on the call begins. At least six months before the desired call opening date. |
| Brainstorming | Lead for call + team/work package organising the call + relevant stakeholders from each partner | As soon as work on the call begins. At least six months before the desired call opening date. |
| Discussion of financial regulations | Lead for call + team/work package organising the call | At least three months before the desired call opening date. |
| Development of monitoring tools | Lead for call + support from the team/work package organising the call | Ideally before the call opens. At the latest on the closing date of the call. |
| Post-award phase | | |
| Monitoring | Leads for call (both for the whole call and locally) | Ongoing for the duration of the project, with highlights to be defined according to the call (report, follow-up meeting). |
| After the funded activity ends | | |
| Reporting | Lead for call | As soon as the eligibility period of the funded activity is over. |
| After all the funded activities end | | |
| Reporting | Lead for call | As soon as the eligibility period of the call is over. |

At the end of the initiatives/activities, a financial report should be drawn up to complement the narrative report and include lessons learned and outcomes of the funded activities — for each activity funded and an overall report on the entire call. These reports will detail the use of the funds and provide relevant receipts and documentation where necessary (see the section below for more details).



05. MONITORING & REPORTING

Project monitoring and reporting are essential elements of proper project management. They help to identify potential problems and make necessary adjustments. A monitoring and reporting system ensures that all goals of the project are achieved within the planned scope and to the expected level of quality, ensuring respect for the values and objectives of the Arqus Alliance.

In view of the diversity of activities undertaken in the framework of the Alliance, it is important to adjust the monitoring and reporting system to the specific purposes of the call.

Monitoring methods should be chosen according to the specific types of actions designed in the call and/or according to some specific factors relevant to achieving selected objectives. Basic principles to follow are those of simplicity, clarity, and non-duplication of effort.

Here are examples of monitoring methods:

1. Academic progress:

- ✓ Transcript of records
- ✓ Progress reports approved by the supervisor(s)
- ✓ Student/recipient self-evaluation reports
- ✓ Other materials if applicable (e.g., research proposal, articles, presentations, video reports, photo documentaries)

2. Knowledge/skills acquisition:

- ✓ Pre- and post-knowledge tests for participants
- ✓ Self-assessment tests for participants (awareness of acquiring new knowledge/skills)
- ✓ Certifications awarded by external organisations/partners

3. Societal impact:

- ✓ University-business-local/regional stakeholder cooperation (e.g., agreements signed, joint actions/initiatives, number of participants, know-how produced)
- ✓ Events addressed to local communities (e.g., face-to-face or virtual participant lists, photo/video documentaries, online streams, number of posts in social media, number of times shared in social media)

4. Sustainability:

- ✓ Reduced inequalities (e.g., facilities for priority groups, special formats of text/articles published online and on-site, wheelchair-friendly spaces)
- ✓ Quality education (e.g., lifelong-learning initiatives, innovative teaching techniques/tools used during activity)
- ✓ Responsible consumption and production (e.g., online events, responsible mobility, digitization of materials)

5. Management of the project:

- ✓ Progress reports (the frequency of which will depend on the nature of the grant/activity funded) with information about various aspects such as: implementation of activities in accordance with the adopted schedule, obstacles encountered and remedial proposals. In particular, applicants should be required to report on changes or circumstances that significantly affect the feasibility of the project (these terms should be described in the Grant Agreement, if applicable).

Each joint project should appoint a person to be responsible for monitoring and reporting. Reporting should be in written form (using specifically designed templates) and monitoring meetings should be held.

- ✓ Budget (eligibility and need for expenditure). It is recommended to provide a catalogue of eligible expenses for each call as well as methods to document the expenses (e.g., tables, Excel spreadsheets, forms, attachments, invoices). It is also advisable to provide information for regular reporting.

When designing a joint call, it is important to determine exactly what indicators (outputs and results) should be reported by the beneficiaries. It is strongly recommended to design monitoring tools before the call is open as this will allow applicants to responsibly plan their activities.



06. PUBLICATION OF THE CALLS

The publication of joint calls should in any case take place firstly through the official channels of the Alliance, under the instructions of the team responsible for the call, in coordination with the Communications Team. See: Arqus Communication and Dissemination plan.

The further institutional dissemination of the joint call (including the announcement of the selection results) at the individual partner universities (institutional Arqus website, newsletter, etc.) is crucial and serves not only to increase the visibility of the Alliance but also the broader visibility of its offers and to reach a higher impact and success.

Universities social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram are also very helpful tools for announcing joint calls, sharing updates, and engaging with the community. At a local level, each university must decide the best ways to promote the calls, including also specific mailing lists that reach targets accurately, as well as other channels such as internal newsletters.

Apart from the initiatives provided by the Alliance, the information can be spread informally, involving academic, non-academic staff and students of each institution, student unions and associations, and services. All these pivots can be a very important alternative of getting deeper into the academic circles, because they are closer to the community.

Offline activities such as classroom presentations, dissemination activities on campus, posters in the faculties, etc, as well as conferences and events engaging with potential participants may be also put in practice.

In principle, the draft of the calls must be prepared by the working group responsible for the initiative. The working group shall receive support and guidance in drafting and launching the calls from the Management Team. However, it is important to consider the transversal collaboration of the nine academic institutions that are part of Arqus. Following the same line of thinking, the responsibility for answering queries and doubts related to the call, as well as for presenting the final results, belongs to the working group responsible for its publication.

07. APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

In order to guarantee full transparency in the application and selection process, the following key elements need to be taken into account and included in the call document/description to be published on the Arqus website.

- 1. Who can apply** - detail eligibility requirements, as outlined below in **section 7.1**.
- 2. How to apply** - specify how the application is to be submitted (via a web portal, email, etc.) and which documents need to be attached to the application. The language(s) to be used to compile the application form/documents should also be specified. See **section 7.2** for further details.
- 3. By when to apply** - specify the call deadline, indicating both date and time (and specifying the time zone!). If there is no fixed deadline but it is an open, rolling application process, make this clear in the call. See **section 7.2** for further details.
- 4. How the selection process will be carried out:** specify how the application process is structured (different stages such as eligibility check, evaluation, final selection) and who will be responsible for each step of the process. See **7.3** and **7.4** for further details.
- 5. Which selection criteria will be used:** detail the adopted criteria and, if possible, the weight given to each of the selection criteria. See **7.4** for further details.
- 6. How to appeal against the selection decision:** this needs to be part and parcel of the call and may depend on the different local/national procedures. See **7.5** for further details.
- 7. Where results will be published:** specify how applicants will be notified of the results (e.g., via web publication of results, via personalised emails, etc.)
- 8. How applicants are to confirm acceptance of the offer or project:** detail what applicants must do to confirm their willingness to participate in the project or call activities and by when they need to confirm. Should there be a reserve list, it is advisable to indicate how and in which order applicants will be contacted, as well as by when the reserve list candidates will be contacted (where applicable). See **7.6** for further information.



7.1. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility requirements may differ depending on the type of call, as well as Arqus members' institutional requirements.



Calls targeting students

- ✓ **Enrolment status:** e.g., many mobility calls are not open to students who are in their first year of studies or who are expected to graduate before the proposed call activities have taken place. On the other hand, for full-degree scholarship calls, it is important to specify by when students need to have completed their previous degree, etc.;
- ✓ Minimum number of credits that must have been obtained by the deadline of the call;
- ✓ Academic record (GPA or similar), ECTS grades or similar merit-based criteria;
- ✓ Language requirements; and
- ✓ Incompatibility or double funding: is double funding eligible if it combines EU and local funding? E.g., is a student who benefits from a local scholarship eligible to apply?

Additional requirements may of course be added depending on the call objectives and specific needs.

Make sure to check local/national rules and regulations before publishing the call.



Calls targeting academic staff

Again, it is important to specify *who can apply*. Consider:

- ✓ **Type of contract:** can all academic staff belonging to Arqus institutions apply, or only full and adjunct professors? What about short-contract professors and early-stage researchers? And professors on sabbatical? It is key to discuss this with all partners and define common criteria. If no common criteria can be identified, then it is important to include a clear reference to the eligibility requirements for each Arqus member. Do staff need to maintain their status during the entire period of mobility or activity? Or is it sufficient that they fulfil the criteria at the time of application?
- ✓ **Involvement in Arqus:** is the call open only to academics who have already been involved in Arqus activities, or to all academics at Arqus institutions?



Calls targeting administrative staff

Similarly to calls targeting academic staff, consider:

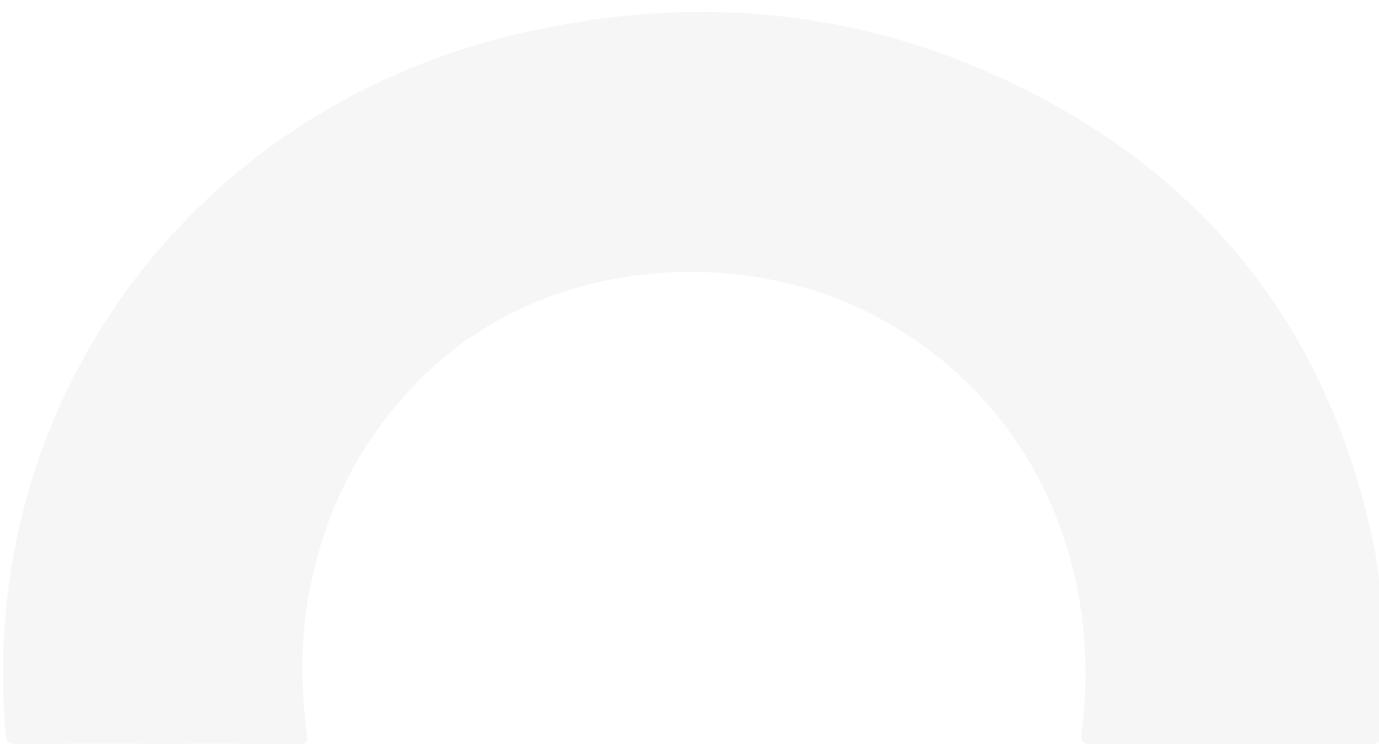
- ✓ **Type of contract:** specify which staff categories the call is open to. Are temporary staff included? What about technical staff? And interns? Should the criteria be fulfilled during the entire mobility or activity?
- ✓ **Involvement in Arqus:** is the call open only to staff members who have already been involved in Arqus activities, or to all staff members?



Calls with mixed target groups (e.g., students, alumni, academics, administrative staff) and/or to be submitted by teams of people

If the call is open to different target groups, make sure to clearly specify this in the call website/document. Is the application to be submitted by one member on behalf of the team, or does it require the signatures of all members? How is the acceptance of members demonstrated?

When the call requires the submission of a team application (e.g., a group of 3 or 5), also clearly indicate how many team members are required, from how many institutions and countries, and from how many different target groups (if applicable). It might also be useful to underline the added value of working in teams with multiple stakeholders.





7.2. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

For the submission of applications, you may decide on an online application platform or an online application form. The decision will depend at least in part on the further processing of the applications — eligibility check, evaluation, ranking, etc. — and on the scope of the application.



Central online application platform

You need to ensure that persons/coordinators and members of selection committees can access the applicants' data. This sometimes requires that the central application platform you may use for your joint call will be located on an external server.

Applicants should be able to apply online via a link to the platform, where they can create an account and find a link to the website with the information on the call, scholarship, funding scheme, etc.

After registering, applicants may receive an email with all relevant information about the application process and contact details for help. You should also decide whether editing of the application will be possible until the deadline or until applicants complete and submit their application.

Members of the selection committee should be given access to the platform and instructions on how to use it. They may also be given the opportunity to review the applications already submitted while the call is still open. This will depend on the decision you have made regarding the timeframe for editing applications.



Online application form

Ensure that the online application form is easy for applicants to access and use. We recommend consulting your university's data protection office and/or IT security representatives regarding the use of application platforms.

The online application form should once again briefly outline the call (objective, requirements, funding, deadlines, selection criteria, etc.). It should be possible for applicants to visualise the entire application form before filling it in to facilitate preparation and higher quality submissions. Similarly, all applicants should receive a confirmation of submission.

In addition, it should be possible to easily download the submitted applications in an appropriate format (e.g., Excel), in order to facilitate the work of the selection committee. It should also be possible to download individual applications. If possible, it is useful to be able to automatically generate statistics on applications initiated and submitted for subsequent reporting.



Application content and supporting documents

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the target group(s) vary(ies) depending on the type/purpose of the joint call. This then determines which data and required supporting documents must be submitted.

A basic principle is only to require essential data for the selection process.

As a first step, you may request basic data from the applicants, where needed. For instance:

For a joint call for a scholarship scheme:

- ✓ contact details,
- ✓ academic background.

For a joint call for funding opportunities within the Alliance:

- ✓ contact details,
- ✓ partner university,
- ✓ role and responsibilities within the Alliance.

In a second step, depending on the purpose of the joint call, you may request application/supporting documents by specifying which of them are mandatory.

For instance, you may request a motivation statement, degree certificates, letters of recommendation, etc. from applicants applying for a scholarship scheme.

In a joint call for funding opportunities, you may request further information about a project proposal (relevance, quality, impact, sustainability, beneficiaries, budget, schedule, monitoring, reporting, etc.).

Thus, examples of data and supporting documents, depending on the type/purpose of the joint call and the established selection criteria, are:

- ✓ Diploma/degree certificates, transcripts of records/diploma supplement, research proposals, letters of recommendation, CV, language certificates, admission documents, passports/ID cards, etc.
- ✓ A budget overview showing expected expenditures by participating partners.



Deadlines

Before you publish the call, even if all the content requirements have been decided, it is essential to set a timeframe for each step of the application and selection process, in addition to the start date and submission deadline. Such a process may include the following steps:

- ✓ Call opening
- ✓ Submission deadline
- ✓ Appointment of selection committee members (see [section 7.3](#))
- ✓ Review of eligibility requirements
 - ✓ For calls addressed to prospective students, internal eligibility check by each partner university (e.g., checking that students have submitted a valid application to an Arqus university)
- ✓ Review and evaluation of applications by the selection committee
- ✓ Approval of selection results by the appropriate Arqus body
- ✓ Communication of selection results
- ✓ Deadline for appeals
- ✓ Nomination and acceptance letters

When you define the time frame, remember also to define the persons/teams/universities who are responsible for each step. When contacting the selection committee, we recommend you to provide them with the entire time frame and organise a training session to ensure inter-rater reliability, the grading system or evaluation scale, information on the joint selection meeting, etc., so that they have an overall picture.

7.3. COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

If the call is designed to select a limited number of applicants, or only applicants eligible based on a certain set of criteria, a selection committee should be set up to ensure a smooth, fair and transparent selection process. Members of the expert profile established for the call should be appointed by the appropriate authority at their universities, and have a clear and full mandate to act within the framework of the call.

In addition, and in line with the Alliance's aim to enhance student engagement at Alliance level, we recommend that student representatives are also appointed as members of the selection committee.

The responsibilities of the selection committee typically include:

1. (Pre-)assessment and ranking of the applications
2. Selection of applications
3. Approval of the committee's decision on selected applications
4. Waiting or substitute lists
5. Resolution of appeals and complaints, where appropriate

Prior to constituting the selection committee, it is important to establish its main principles and functioning.



Decide on the size of the selection committee

Normally, there should be one representative from each partner university in the selection committee, plus an alternate member to step in if the main appointee is not available for any reason. However, depending on the nature of the call (e.g., if it is a smaller-scale internal call, and if there is no need to represent the interests or reflect the peculiarities of all partners), the committee may comprise a smaller number of members (normally at least 5 members, aiming for an odd number in case voting on decisions proves necessary).



Decide on the profile and competences of selection committee members

For calls that involve qualitative criteria and calls where the content of applications is assessed, the members appointed should possess expertise in the topic of the call or in performing activities of the type assessed by the call criteria. It is good practice in calls involving qualitative assessment criteria or content assessment to ensure that the members of the selection committee represent different academic fields (i.e., natural sciences, health sciences, arts and humanities, social sciences, engineering and technology).

Drawing up a list of competences or required experience for committee members will allow for a smoother nomination process. Examples might be: committee members should be active academics with at least five years' experience in research or teaching; committee members should have experience or knowledge of internationalisation process design, etc.

It is essential to avoid any potential conflict of interest in the composition of the selection committee and, where appropriate, to ensure that members commit to the confidentiality of the process (see the template for the declaration of absence of conflict of interest in Annex VI).

For the sake of transparency and legitimacy, the composition of the selection committee must be accessible to anyone who requests it.



Establish the nomination principles

Selection committee members are normally appointed by partners. It is good practice for each partner to adopt internal principles and policies for selection committee nominations, ensuring that nominees conform to the agreed profiles and competences. Remember to communicate internally at each university to ensure that nominees are fully empowered to take institutional positions in their evaluation work.



Decide on the functioning of the selection committee

As part of the preparation process, it should be decided how the committee will operate and what outcomes they should achieve. Consider the following:

- ✓ Distribution of the workload: should committee members perform individual pre-assessment of applications? Should each member assess applications relating only to their own institution or should they assess all the applications jointly during the committee meeting? It is normally advisable for committee members to perform an individual pre-assessment and ranking of applications prior to committee meetings.
- ✓ Form of assessment: to ensure the transparency of the assessment, it is useful to design an assessment template for committee members to fill in (including a selection threshold, if required); alternatively, they may be requested to provide written feedback regarding applications.
- ✓ Chairing the selection committee: the committee should appoint a Chair by any method jointly agreed by the members: on a voluntary basis, by drawing lots, or by vote, attempting always to ensure equal opportunities for all partners.



Set up the selection committee

Once the committee members have been appointed, they should receive full information regarding the call, the selection criteria, the assessment principles (including templates, if applicable), access to eligible applications, and the proposed committee meeting dates.

It is advisable to organise a dedicated online information session for all selection committee members, addressing the selection process, criteria and other details of the selection before conducting any joint assessment meeting(s), and allowing members to meet each other.



7.4. SELECTION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

To guarantee the transparency of the selection process, the following information should be easily accessible when the call is published and opened:

- ✓ The selection criteria and any grading system.
- ✓ The list of members of the selection committee and the capacity in which they sit on the committee.
- ✓ Which body is the final decision-maker: the selection committee or a higher Arqus body.

It is crucial to familiarise the selection committee with the selection principles and criteria. In some cases, it may be useful to finalise the criteria together with the committee, as they may provide valuable insights into important aspects of the call and applications.

When deciding on the selection criteria, the following should be considered:

- ✓ All criteria should be clearly stated. If general terms are used (e.g., innovativeness, creativity, etc.), it should be specified how these terms are understood in the context of the call.
- ✓ Complex criteria should be avoided. They should be broken down into separate, more specific criteria.
- ✓ If assessment involves grading, an explanation of the scale range should be provided (e.g., 1 – application does not explain the innovativeness; 5 – application explicitly explains the innovativeness of a project; etc.).
- ✓ When using qualitative criteria, evaluators may be asked to provide a brief rationale for their evaluation. This is especially useful in order to give applicants feedback on their application.

The following steps are recommended for the selection procedure:

1. Perform a technical eligibility check and sort the applications so that only eligible applications are further evaluated.
2. Send eligible applications to the corresponding selection committee members for pre-assessment, in accordance with data protection regulations.
3. Collect pre-assessment from the selection committee.
4. Organise selection committee meeting(s) for selection.

5. Formalise the selection committee's decision in the meeting minutes.
6. Send the proposal to the authority competent to take the final decision, where this is not the selection committee itself.
7. Publish the results of the call and/or inform the applicants on their acceptance/rejection.

7.5. APPEALS PROCEDURE

The Arqus European University Alliance guarantees absence of conflict of interest, as well as transparency and equal treatment of all applicants. Thus, the right to appeal is a basic principle and objections relating to the selection results may be filed.

The corresponding procedure, modalities, and deadlines should be determined before the opening of the call and be made accessible to all applicants:

- ✓ default time-limit for filing an appeal;
- ✓ person or contact address to contact for appeal;
- ✓ documents to be provided as part of the appeal (this could include: written reasoning for the appeal, evidence of eligibility that was dismissed during the pre-selection, etc.);
- ✓ time limit within which a response to the appeal must be given (normally, appeals need 14-30 days to be processed, although this depends on the complexity of the call and criteria, and may also be pre-established by local or national regulations in some cases);
- ✓ how the response will be provided (e.g., formal communication to appellant by email; the minutes of the selection committee meeting or any other Arqus body meeting where the appeal was deliberated);
- ✓ consequences of accepted appeals: changed applicant rankings and/or results of the call (please see Annex IX).

The following points should be covered in the response to an appeal:

- ✓ The reason for the appeal, the date of receipt and the supporting documents or evidence provided.
- ✓ The body responsible for responding to the appeal.
- ✓ Selection criteria and/or any other information available to the applicants during the call.
- ✓ A clear decision by the appropriate body accepting or rejecting the appellant's arguments, based on fully transparent and reasoned grounds. When appropriate, provide an applicant with alternative resolution scenarios.
- ✓ If the appeal contains multiple requests/reasons, the response should cover each of them.



7.6. ACCEPTANCE PROCEDURE

A properly designed acceptance procedure will enable organisers of the call to complete the formalities and probably reduce the number of questions that may arise at this stage.

Similar to chapter 7.2 “Submission of applications”, we highly recommend keeping the acceptance procedure as simple as possible and thus only require essential data and documents from the selected candidates.

Suggested elements of an acceptance procedure include and vary depending on the purpose and scope of the joint call:

1. Schedule for the acceptance procedure as part of the overall application process (available on the official Arqus website).
2. Information on when and how contact will be made once the evaluation of all proposals/ applications has been completed.
3. Information on the possibility of and procedure for withdrawing an application (a deadline and format for communication of withdrawal should be established).

For joint calls for scholarship opportunities, for instance, we recommend creating the following templates:

- A. Nomination letter and letter of acceptance**, which includes, for instance, the official nomination for the scholarship stating the approved funding amount and the funding period, a confirmation of acceptance or the requirement to sign and return the nomination letter as official confirmation of acceptance of the obligations and conditions connected with the funding.

The call should indicate that failure to provide the required documents will result in the non-award of the grant or scholarship!

- B. Rejection letter** containing brief information on the reason for rejection and, if applicable, on the appeal procedure.
- C. Waiting list letter** with brief information about the selection procedure, the use of the waiting list and the expected timeline for the reallocation of scholarships or funding and, if applicable, the appeal procedure.

In order to avoid possible unjustified objections or appeals, it is advisable to indicate in the call that email messages to the address provided in the application will be deemed to have been duly delivered.

08. PERSONAL DATA PROCESSING

As joint controllers, the members of the Arqus European University Alliance take data protection very seriously and will treat personal data confidentially and in accordance with all legal requirements.

A Data Protection Declaration for joint calls should be prepared, outlining the purpose, scope and legal basis of data processing as well as the duration of storage of these personal data, potential transmission of personal data, the rights of applicants and relevant contact details of the Data Protection Officers (DPO) at each Arqus university. The Data Protection Declaration should be published both with the call and on the relevant website. If you use an online application form or platform, ensure that this Declaration is also linked/published there.

For instance, in the case of joint scholarships/funding schemes for students, the Data Protection Declaration is designed to inform

1. the applicant/funding recipient of the relevant call/funding scheme, as well as
2. referees (if letters of recommendation are required) in accordance with Articles 12, 13 and 14 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), on the purpose, legal basis, and the applicant's rights regarding the processing of personal data by the Arqus European University Alliance.

For a joint funding scheme within the Arqus Alliance, for instance, the Data Protection Declaration is designed to inform the applicant for the relevant fund in accordance with Articles 12 and 13 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), on the purpose, legal basis, and their rights regarding the processing of personal data by the Arqus European University Alliance.

Data processing on an application platform must be regulated by a data protection agreement and a corresponding GDPR data processing contract with the provider.

This contract should cover the following points: *Type and purpose of data processing, type of personal data, categories of data subjects, obligations of the processor, processing only on documented instructions, information on control actions, maintaining confidentiality, taking necessary technical and organisational measures, obligation to cooperate with data subject rights, support in complying with the obligations established in Art 32 - 36 GDPR, reference to processing directory, inspection and control powers, information in the event of non-compliance with instructions, place where data processing is carried out, sub-processors, applicable law.*

Furthermore, a **Joint Controller Agreement** was established and signed by all Arqus partners, reflecting the arrangements that the Arqus partners have agreed to put in place to facilitate the processing of Personal Data relating students, graduates and academic and administrative staff of the participating universities between the partners acting as joint controllers, and explaining the purposes for which that Personal Data may be used. Within this Joint Controller Agreement, the Arqus partner universities determine their respective responsibilities for compliance with the obligations under GDPR (Art. 26 para. 1 phrase 2). They agree to process and to use the personal data within the Alliance in the terms set out in this agreement and undertake to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure and to be able to demonstrate that processing is performed in accordance with GDPR taking into account the nature, scope, context and purpose of processing as well as the risks of varying likelihood and severity for the rights and freedoms of natural persons (Art. 24 para. 1 GDPR).



09. DISSEMINATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

In terms of dissemination, working group leaders responsible for the call shall inform Arqus Communication Officers about the publication of the call in due time (e.g., at least 2 weeks before the expected date of publication). Communication officers should then ensure that joint calls are published and shared in advance on the main Arqus website and social media, as well as on selected channels at each partner university. Following the implementation of the activities and projects, follow-up articles, news and reports should be produced. Possible media formats include testimonials from scholarship holders, success stories, social media and blog posts for promotional purposes. For information and quality assurance purposes, internal evaluations and reports are needed to ensure the accessibility, appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the joint calls and their outcomes. These evaluations also provide a basis for modifications to enhance procedures, calendars, selection criteria, etc. for future calls.

With regard to the sustainability of the outcomes of a joint call, they may provide an impetus for initiating further collaborative activities. Successful initiatives may also be institutionalised by the Arqus partner universities, thus improving the international competitiveness of the Alliance.

Joint structures established also support the integration of partner universities within Arqus. By engaging in joint activities, formats and projects, students and staff develop intercultural competencies and build meaningful relationships with peers and colleagues in a cross-European, multicultural and multilingual environment. There are opportunities for long-term perspectives and further development of learning or research projects. Finally, joint calls strengthen university partnerships and promote European values and identity.

10. CHECKLIST

ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

1 Responsibility

2 Communication

3 Schedule

4 Procedures

1. First and foremost, it is important to determine which **working group, task force or ad hoc committee** is responsible for designing and implementing the relevant joint call, and to ensure that all partners are aware of the call and their role in all related processes (one to two persons per university). Internally, at each university, it is essential to ensure that those involved have sufficient mandate to carry out their tasks and that those responsible for the corresponding activity are in agreement with positions taken and decisions adopted.
2. They should agree on a **format of collaboration** for organisational purposes: online or face-to-face meetings or both, as well as how many meetings will be necessary, and their regularity. It is highly recommended to take minutes of all meetings, to share summaries and tasks via email. For this purpose, you may set up a shared area in addition to a mailing list for the working group in order to exchange and jointly edit documents.
3. The working group needs to establish a **time frame**, setting dates and deadlines for individual processes such as: preparation of the call, distribution, application period, selection process, notifications, etc. (for more details, [see 7.2. Submission of applications](#)). It is of utmost importance to take into account the eligibility period for the use of external funds and other requirements of the application established in grant agreements or similar.
4. In preparation for the call, the working group must decide in which **format the applications** should be received (analogue application form or online application) and how the information about the call should be announced.

To ensure a smooth application and selection process with all its steps, we recommend the format of an online application. This enables not only a clear overview and presentation of the applications submitted, but also the compilation of statistics for reporting purposes.

These decisions should then be discussed with the IT and/or Communications Team of the Alliance so they can set up the appropriate **online portals and a shared web space** to publish the call, content, admission requirements, and any possible conditions accordingly. The information must be provided to the Communications Team with enough time for them to prepare the call in a correct way. Furthermore, the working group must also decide on the required documents to be uploaded, and the information to be provided. After publication via the Arqus channels, each partner is asked to disseminate the call via the channels used at their institution.



5. It is advisable to create a **joint email address** for receiving applicant enquiries and sending out all necessary information. In consultation with the working group, all partners should jointly determine who will manage this email address and handle the main communication. Nevertheless, there should also be individual contact persons at each partner university, such as Alliance Officers or International Officers, who can respond to individual enquiries.
6. It must also be determined which person(s) is/are responsible for checking the **eligibility/formality** of the applications received and who will prepare the corresponding **overview(s)** for the joint selection meeting/committee.
7. Each partner should appoint members for the **selection committee** on the basis of jointly agreed criteria (e.g., staff/student category, academic disciplines, etc.) previously agreed in the team.

In a nutshell:

- 1 Determination of working group, task force or ad hoc committee
- 2 Agreement on format of collaboration
- 3 Definition of a time frame
- 4 Decision on the application format
- 5 Creation of a joint email address for enquiries
- 6 Decision on roles and responsibilities for the eligibility/formality check
- 7 Appointment of members for the selection committee

ANNEX I. SAMPLES FOR CALLS

I. Announcements



Co-funded by the European Union

arQus
Innovation Fund

First call of the Arqus Seed Funding Scheme

idea

600,000€ for innovative activities under the first call.

Submit your online application for seed funding and outline the innovative activities you want to develop and implement as part of your work package.

funding

Online Application

Application deadline: May 31, 2023 (23:55 CEST)



Ad hoc bottom-up initiatives

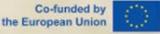
Call 2023

arQus
Innovation Fund

Apply by 30th November

Co-funded by the European Union






**First call of the Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund
(doctoral students only)**

We are looking for talented postgraduates from all over the world who want to pursue doctoral studies at one of the Arqus partner universities.

Application deadline: May 31st 2023 (23:59 CEST)

WHAT DOES THE SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDE?

- Subsistence allowance of 1400€/month
- Coverage of tuition fee at the student's entrance university
- Special needs fund of 250€/month for students with fewer opportunities

✉ talent-scholarship@arqus-alliance.eu <https://arqus-alliance.eu/arqus-talent-scholarship-fund/>





**Second call of the Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund
(Master's students only)**

We are looking for talented postgraduates from around the world who want to pursue a Master's degree at one of the Arqus partner universities.

Application deadline: 3rd July 2023 (23:59 CEST)

WHAT DOES THE SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDE?

- Subsistence allowance of 1400€/month
- Coverage of tuition fee at the student's entrance university
- Special needs fund of 250€/month for students with fewer opportunities

✉ talent-scholarship@arqus-alliance.eu <https://arqus-alliance.eu/arqus-talent-scholarship-fund/>



II. Text Examples

-  Arqus Innovation Fund - 1st call
-  Arqus Innovation Fund - ad hoc bottom-up initiatives
-  Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund - 1st call
-  Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund - 2nd call

ANNEX II. SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM

-  Online Application Form

ANNEX III. SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SELECTION RESULTS

-  Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund_email templates

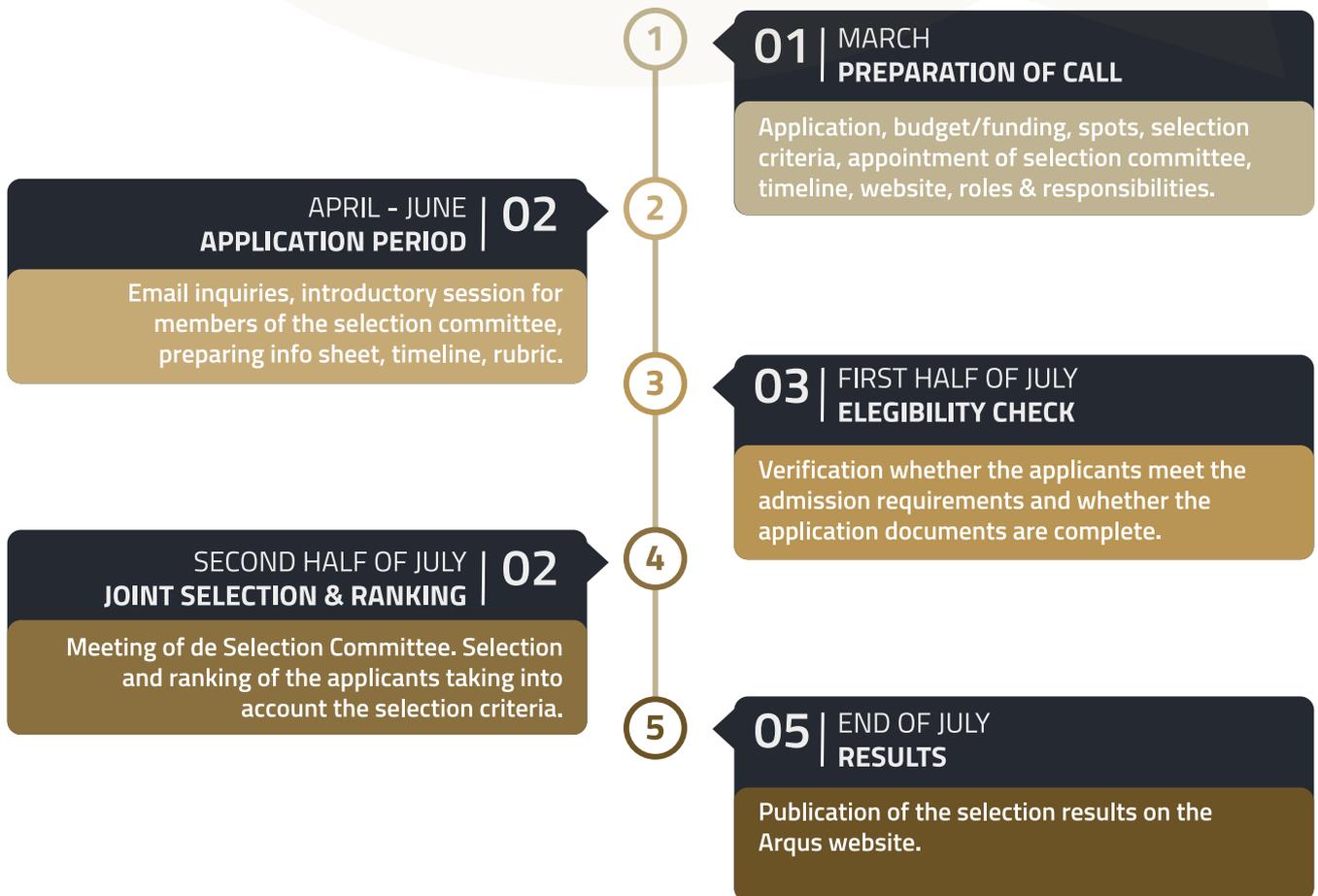
ANNEX IV. PROCESS & STANDARD TIMELINE FOR CALLS

-  Info sheet Arqus Innovation Fund
-  Info sheet SC Arqus Innovation Fund
-  Info sheet SC Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund



ANNEX V.

SAMPLE FORECAST CALENDAR FOR CALLS



ANNEX VI.

SAMPLE DECLARATION OF ABSENCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST



Declaration of Absence of Conflict of Interest

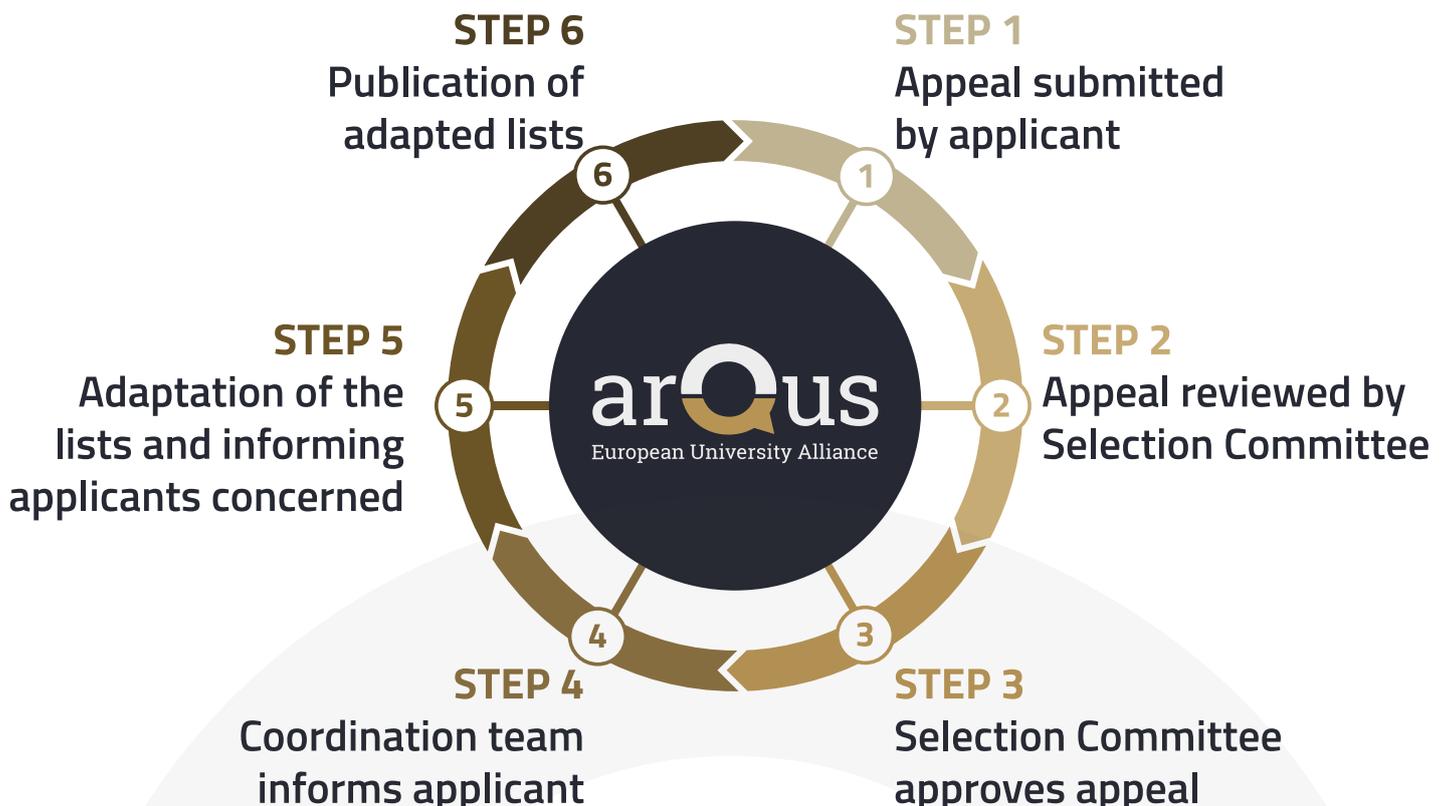
ANNEX VII. BUDGET MONITORING TOOLS

 Template Budget Tool Innovation Fund

ANNEX VIII. QUESTION CATALOGUE

 Arqus Talent Fund Question Catalogue

ANNEX IX. PROCEDURE IN CASE OF ACCEPTED APPEALS



arqus

European University Alliance



UNIVERSIDAD
DE GRANADA



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



Maynooth
University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth



Universidade
do Minho



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



Vilniaus
universitetas



Uniwersytet
Wrocławski

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