

CASCADE-FELLOWS

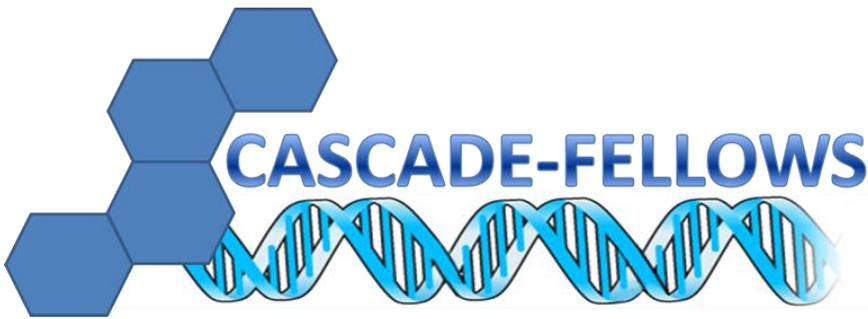
Guide for Evaluators

v1.0

This guide describes general principles and procedures to be used in the evaluation of proposals submitted for CASCADE-FELLOWS fellowships.

It includes the following:

- Introduction to the CASCADE-FELLOWS programme
- Definitions
- General requirements
- Eligibility criteria
- Timeline
- Description of the proposal procedure
- Evaluation Criteria
- Ethical issues
- Host Organisations participating in the call
- Online forms provided by the applicants
- Declaration by the Host Organisation
- Online forms for the Evaluation



Introduction

CASCADE-FELLOWS is a new international fellowship programme for experienced researchers in the field of Life Sciences co-funded by the EU Seventh Framework Programme under the Marie Curie Actions scheme – People, Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND). The programme is coordinated by the University of Nottingham in the UK and currently involves over 25 international host organisations recognised for their excellence in research in the field. Grant agreement PCOFUND-GA-2012-600181 is between the University of Nottingham and the Research Executive Agency (REA) with a project start date of 2013-05-01.

CASCADE-FELLOWS will support over 90 international researchers working on projects lasting between 12-24 months recruited through three open Calls for proposals. The programme is open to applicants from all over the world under three different mobility schemes: incoming, outgoing and reintegration. Fellows will also benefit from mentorship and a structured training programme to support their continuing career development to become world leaders in their chosen field.

The objectives of CASCADE-FELLOWS are to:

- Recruit and train experienced researchers from across the globe to establish them as future leaders in the European Research Area
- Add a significant international networking and collaboration dimension for European SME and research groups by including host organisations outside the EU
- Offer the possibility to develop joint academia and industry (including SMEs) projects by allowing academic researchers mobilised to industry to retain their academic connections while at the same time benefiting from working in an industrial environment
- Allow researchers free choice of research topic, destination and research group

Definitions

Experienced Researcher: professional researchers who at the time of the Call deadline are either 1) in possession of a doctoral degree (PhD), independently of the time taken to acquire it, or 2) have at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) after obtaining the degree which formally allows them to embark on a doctorate in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained or the country in which the research training is provided irrespective of whether or not a doctorate was envisaged.

SME: Small and medium-sized enterprise with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50m

Host Organisation: legal entity where the experienced researcher carries out the research activities during his or her Fellowship

Mobility: To facilitate the implementation we have identified three schemes under which Fellows may apply:

- **Outgoing mobility:** open to citizens of EU Member States or Associated Countries who wish to work in a Host Organisation in another Member State, Associated Country or a Third Country. This may be one of the named partner organisations or a suitable non-partner organisation, provided that the location is other than the researcher's home country. **To respect the European identity of the project applicants from a Third Country CANNOT apply for outgoing mobility (i.e. non-EU citizens may not apply to non-EU countries).**
- **Incoming mobility:** open to top-class experienced researchers from Third countries (i.e. not EU Member States or Associated Countries) who wish to work in a Host Organisation located in an EU Member State or Associated Country. Applicants must not have worked in their chosen host country for more than 12 months in the 36 months preceding the qualifying date.
- **Re-integration:** open to citizens of EU Member States or Associated Countries who have carried out research in a Third Country for at least the past three years before the qualifying date and who now wish to take up a research position with a Host Organisation located within an EU Member State or Associated Country.

EU member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Great Britain, Sweden, Hungary,

Associated Countries: Switzerland, Israel, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Republic of Moldova

Third Countries: countries that are not one of the EU member states or Associated State to the EU FP7 Programme

The CASCADE-FELLOWS application process



Preparing an application

General aspects

Applications for CASCADE-FELLOWS fellowships should be prepared by the applicant in close collaboration with the chosen host organisation representative (Scientist in Charge). Applicants have free choice of Host Organisation: a list of agreed participants is given on the project website, but applicants are free to propose their own Host Organisations provided they are able to evidence suitable support for their research and a financial commitment to cover 60% of their Fellowship costs.

Applications must be submitted online using the application portal on the project website and applicants must provide evidence that the host organisation has been engaged with developing their proposal and is prepared to provide the necessary 60% cofinancing.

The key actors in the application are:

- **The applicant:** The applicant must be an experienced researcher as defined by the EU Marie Curie eligibility criteria. It is the responsibility of the applicant to check that he/she is eligible to participate in the call, and to prepare the application in collaboration with the chosen Host Organisation.
- **The Host Organisation:** The Host Organisation is represented by a senior scientist (Scientist in Charge). The Scientist in Charge will be contacted by the applicant to plan and prepare a research proposal together which will be submitted to the University of Nottingham Programme Office (PO) via the programme online

application portal. In addition, the Host Organisation will make a formal commitment to provide 60% cofinancing for the Fellowship.

- The CASCADE-FELLOWS Programme Office (PO): The PO is responsible for prescreening applications to ensure that applicants meet the programme's published eligibility criteria. The PO will also be responsible for providing all the necessary documentation. The PO will contact and establish evaluation panels based on the applications submitted under each Call.
- Evaluation Panels: scientific evaluation of each proposal will be conducted by a different evaluation panel.
- Advisory Board: The CASCADE-FELLOWS Advisory Board will oversee the evaluation process for each Call, from submission and pre-registration to final selection. The remit of the Board includes ensuring that evaluation of applications has been conducted in a fair manner and that no inappropriate factors have affected the selection process.

Documentation

All necessary documentation will be made available on either the public or secure areas of the CASCADE-FELLOWS website. All applications will be treated as confidential and must not be distributed to, disclosed to or discussed with any other parties besides the Evaluation Panel, the PO, the Advisory Board and the CASCADE-FELLOWS Programme Coordinator, Professor Michael Symonds.

Complete application documentation will include:

- CV giving information about publications and any career break
- Research Proposal
- Motivation Letter explaining why the applicant is interested in joining the programme
- Career Development Plan
- Letter of Commitment from the Host Organisation
- Letters of Recommendation (Optional)

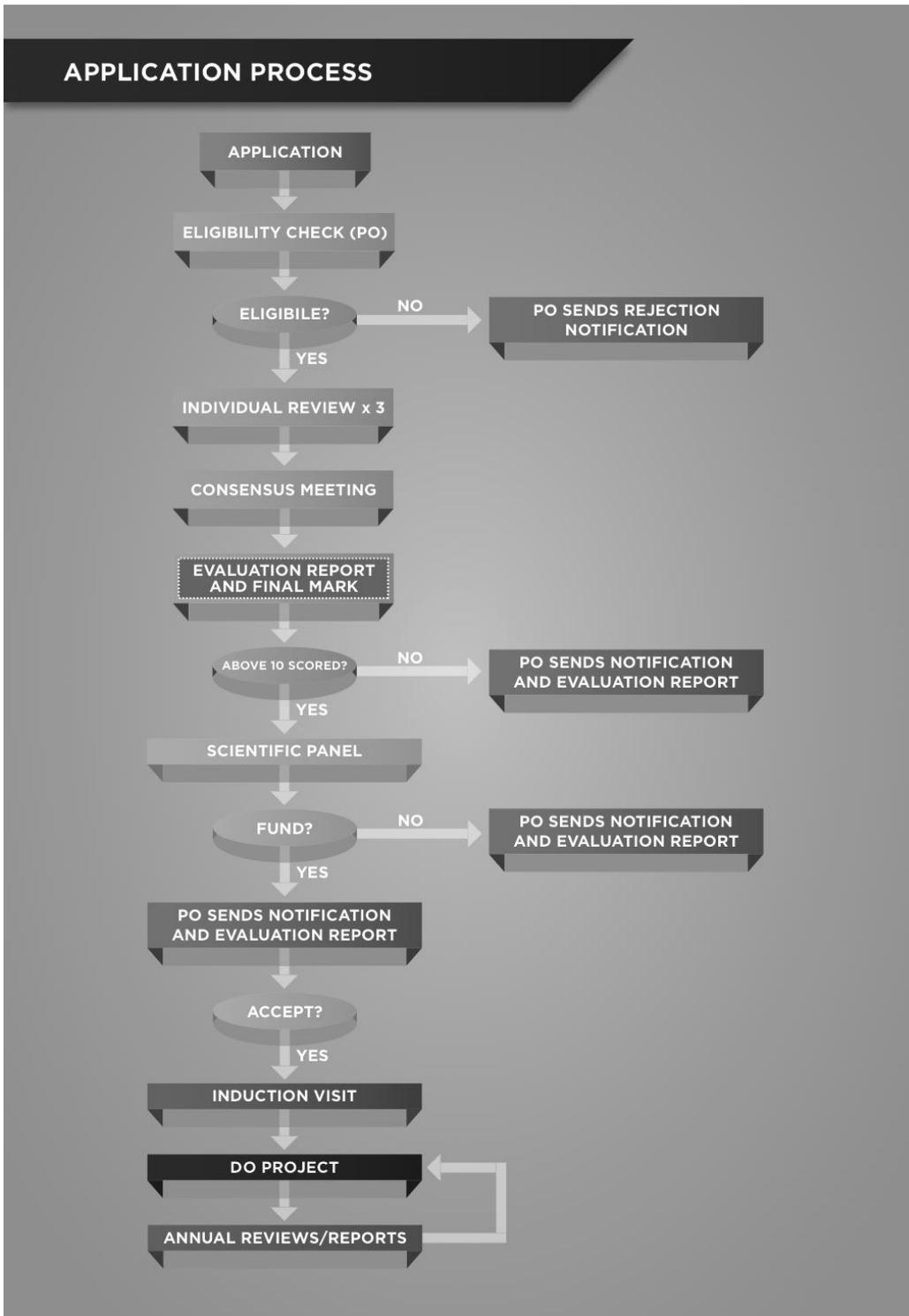
The templates are provided by the PO and available online in the Application Portal. Information regarding maximum length of individual section is governed in the online system (which will enforce a maximum character count for certain sections) and must be respected.

Within three working days of the Call deadline, the PO will acknowledge safe receipt of applications and check for

- Applicant eligibility
- Language (applications not in English will be rejected automatically)
- Completeness: all requested material must be available
- Uniqueness: each candidate may only submit one application per Call

Any ineligible applications will be rejected automatically by the PO and not proceed to the evaluation stage. Ineligible candidates will be informed of the reason for rejection and encouraged to consider resubmission under a future Call if appropriate.

The Evaluation Process



Overview of the CASCADE-FELLOWS evaluation process

Key factors for successful applications

CASCADE-FELLOWS is a non-thematic, researcher-driven, programme in the field of Life Sciences. Selection will be based on

- research excellence of the submitted proposal
- formal eligibility of the applicant as described in Annex 1 of the EC contract.

Formal requirements

Applicants must conform to at least one of the Marie Curie mobility schemes:

- **Incoming mobility:** Residents of the EU member states, Associated Countries or Third Countries who take up a position in a Host Organisation in a different EU Member State or Associated Country
- **Outgoing mobility:** Residents of the EU or Associated Country states who wish to move to a different Host Organisation located in any EU member state, Associated Country or Third Country
- **Re-Integration:** EU or Associated Country researchers who wish to return to the European Union or Associated Country after performing research in a third country for more than three years in the previous five years.

Applicants must comply with the Mobility Criteria dictated by the European Union as stated in Annex 1 of the EC contract:

At the time of the Call deadline, researchers must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the host organisation for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the call deadline. Please note that a specific mobility rule applies for researchers returning from parental leave (please see details under section on career breaks)

Applications will be pre-screened to ensure that they comply with the formal requirements and to ensure that only eligible applications are transferred to evaluation panels.

The evaluation will score each application against scientific, innovation and other scientific parameters according to the table below:

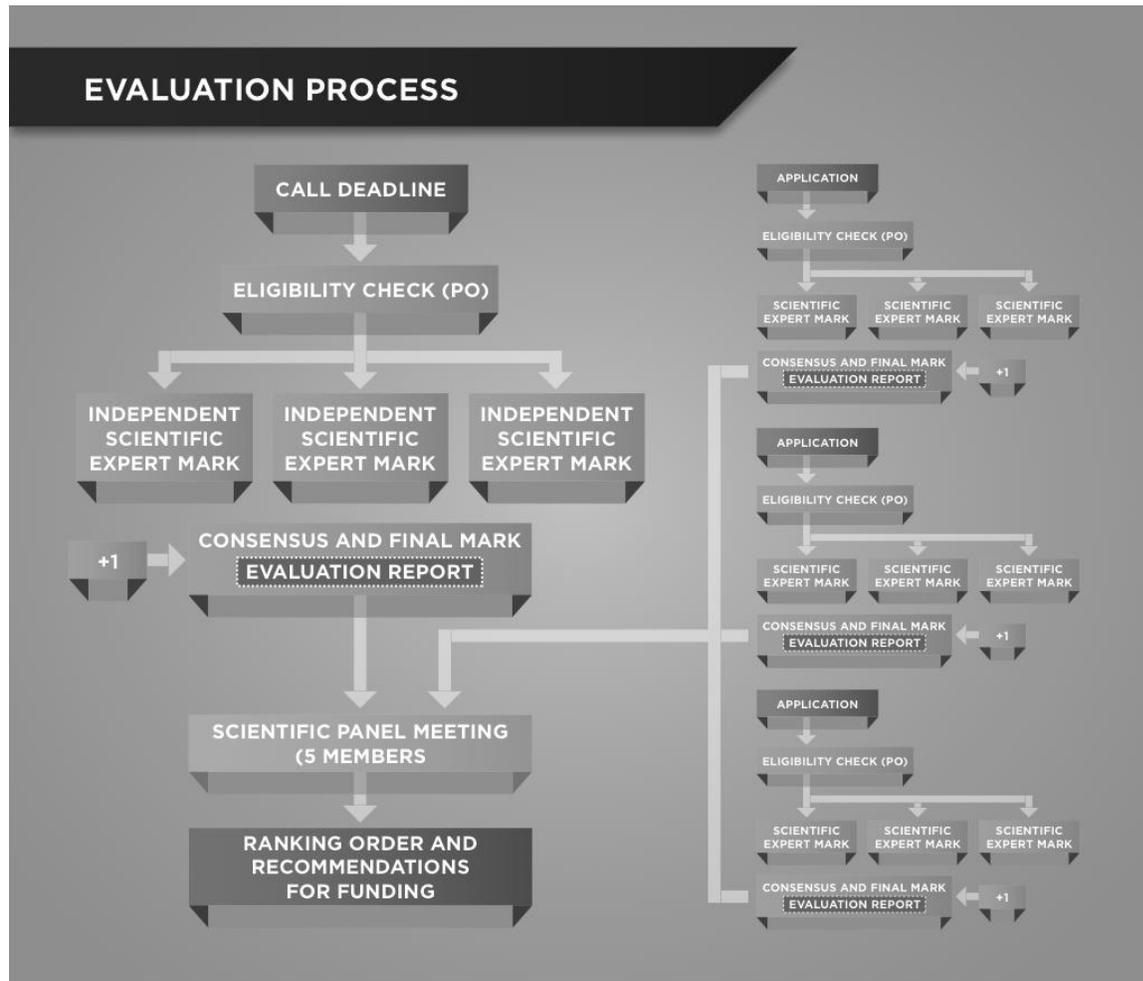
Criteria				Points
<p>Relevance: <i>How consistent is the project with the programme objectives and how effectively does it contribute to the desired impacts of career development and strengthened trans-national partnerships?</i></p>	<p>Is the individual researcher's CV sufficiently well aligned to the relevance and quality of additional scientific training and complementary skills?</p>	<p>Is there a potential for acquiring competencies during the project to improve the prospects of reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional maturity, diversity and independence at a high level, in particular through exposure to complementary skills training?</p>	<p>Do the planned collaboration and mobility activities support the programme's objective of strengthened international and/or academia/industry/public partnerships?</p>	3/3
<p>Research & innovation quality: <i>Is the research and innovation internationally competitive? Does it conduct needs-driven research?</i></p>	<p>Is the research project original and innovative, and does it go sufficiently beyond the state of the art?</p>	<p>Do the goals, strategy and content of the research project include sufficient interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary aspects?</p>	<p>Does the research comply with the ethical rules of the programme?</p>	3/3
<p>Feasibility: <i>What is the capacity and credibility concerning implementation of the proposed project?</i></p>	<p>Is the research project feasible in the proposed time period?</p>	<p>Does the host have sufficient supervisory staff and infrastructure to support the applicant?</p>	<p>Have alternative plans been considered in cases of unforeseen failures?</p>	3/3
<p>Exploitation: <i>Does the project have the capacity to convert into social benefits and/or commercial exploitation?</i></p>	<p>Does the career development plan lead to broader skills and enhanced career perspectives?</p>	<p>Does the research plan foresee appropriate dissemination activities, including publications and presenting at conference?</p>	<p>Does the applicant have opportunities to implement new knowledge and/or technology into appropriate market areas?</p>	3/3
				12/12

Additional comments

SME Participation: CASCADE-FELLOWS recognises the important role that research-performing SMEs play in the development of science and in addition in the economic growth of the European Union. Therefore applications that include active SME participation are strongly encouraged. While we recognise that scientific excellence should not be compromised, in situations where applications are of equal standard, SME participation will be positively evaluated and applications involving SMEs will be selected.

Gender Aspects: CASCADE-FELLOWS recognises that female researchers face additional obstacles in their scientific careers. Family situation (or lack thereof) should therefore not be a consideration in the evaluation process.

Role of the CASCADE-FELLOWS scientific panel



CASCADE-FELLOWS selection process

The CASCADE-FELLOWS Scientific Panel will consist of:

- Member of the CASCADE-FELLOWS Advisory Board
- University of Nottingham Coordinator or his representative
- Members of the scientific community
- Administrative support

Applications which pass the preliminary eligibility check performed by the PO will be sent to three independent scientific experts for peer review.

Selection of Evaluators

Evaluators will be selected according to the subject matter of the applications received. Experts will be selected according to their acknowledged specialist field matched against the scientific focus of the application and will be required to sign a formal Letter of Appointment which includes the following:

- Confidentiality agreement
- Declaration of potential Conflict of Interest

These documents will be stored centrally at the University of Nottingham for five years beyond the duration of the programme and will be referred to in the case of any dispute or programme audit.

Applicants will be asked to nominate two specialists who might be suitable to review their proposals. These may or may not be used for the evaluation and may form a basis for the PO to identify and contact a pool of evaluators who might be approached for other applications in the same area under the current or any future calls.

Evaluators will be selected primarily according to their acknowledged competence and deep scientific knowledge in the field of the proposal and may have professional or industrial backgrounds as well as in academic research. Their fluency in English will also be considered. However, to ensure objectivity, they will also be screened for impartiality and to ensure that they do not have a reason to be pre-disposed to act favourably in the applicant's interests. Such conflicts of interest include anyone in the following categories:

- Members of governing bodies or committees of the Host Organisation or applicant's home institution
- Current employees of the Host Organisation or the applicant's home institution
- Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with the applicant or the proposed Scientist in Charge
- Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with the applicant or a member of staff in the relevant research unit at the Host Organisation
- Anyone who has acted as supervisor or line manager for the applicant or the Scientist in Charge at the Host Organisation
- The evaluators should not have worked on collaborative projects with the applicants or research group at the proposed Host Organisation for at least 5 years

In the interest of clarity, participation in multi-partner projects (such as EU funded proposals) does not represent grounds for exclusion, provided that these did not involve collaborative research work between the evaluator, the applicant and the host.

The PO will make every effort to identify suitable evaluators but individuals should alert the PO that they may not be suitable for evaluation of certain proposals according to the criteria above, especially if these arise during the course of the evaluation. In the case of doubt the PO will attempt to resolve this by requesting further information from other sources, such as the European Union, should this be deemed appropriate. The PO will also seek advice from the University of Nottingham Quality and Standards Committee.

In the interest of maintaining the highest standards and quality of the programme, the appointment of evaluators who fail to fulfil the role as defined or act in contrary to the procedures and policies of CASCADE-FELLOWS and the EU Marie Curie Actions will be terminated.

Peer Review Process

The scientific evaluation and scoring of submitted applications will be performed remotely by the evaluators according to the provided scheme. Evaluators are strongly encouraged to use the programme's secure online evaluation portal. In cases of difficulty it may be possible to submit results to the PO by other secure means but this will need to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, and in such cases the PO will be responsible for entering results into the portal for future audit purposes. Experts will provide brief comments explaining why the score was given and how the application can be improved.

If the proposal contains sensitive ethical issues (as specified in the ethics issue table) the PO and Scientific Panel will make sure that the application is also reviewed by an ethics expert in the relevant area. In the case of proposals involving human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) evaluators must declare whether the use of hESCs is justified and necessary for the success of the project. It is important to state that applications may be rejected if the ethical issues are not clarified appropriately.

Following completion of all three evaluations for a proposal the PO will organise a remote consensus meeting of all three evaluators plus an impartial observer who will ensure that fairness has been exercised at all levels, including impartiality as to gender, creed, race and family responsibilities. The consensus meeting will serve as a gathering point for the individual scores provided by the experts. Based on the individual scores and comments plus any discussion during the consensus meeting, the independent observer will compile an overall evaluation report that will be submitted to the PO and released to the applicant at the end of the evaluation period for the Call.

In cases where the expert scores vary considerably and a consensus cannot be achieved, the observer may request a second review round or alternatively the application will undergo additional evaluation. Furthermore, the Programme Office may at any time request information from the evaluators regarding the status of the applications and regarding the outcome of the review.

Communication of evaluation results to applicants

Once all reports have been received by the PO those scoring above 10 points will be submitted to the programme Scientific Panel, chaired by Professor Mike Symonds or his nominated representative. The panel will meet to compile the ranking list for each call and make formal recommendations for funding, including identification of a reserve list. The final decision will be taken by the CASCADE-FELLOWS Coordinator, or alternatively by his selected representative. The results of the ranking will be communicated to the PO within two working days of the meeting. The PO will make formal offers to accepted applicants and notification of rejections no later than one working week after receipt of the results. Reserve list candidates will be made aware that they may be offered a position should a position become available at later stages. Offers must be formally accepted within 30 days of their being made.

Any successful proposals involving use of hESCs will be forwarded together with the scientific evaluation reports to the REA for EC ethics review. Research involving hESCs may

not start until the PO receives approval from the EC ethics review and PEOPLE Programme Committee. This information will be provided by the CASCADE-FELLOWS Project Officer to the PO.

One month after the evaluation has been completed the PO will produce a summary report of the completed call to submit to the REA and provide statics including:

- Number of complete applications received
- Number of eligible and rejected applications
- Outcome of the evaluation
- Time taken and other parameters
- Names of the Advisory Board
- Names of evaluators