



## **i3S Guidelines for the constitution, evaluation and discontinuation of Research Groups**

The guidelines for constitution and evaluation of Research Groups was approved by the Board of Directors (BD) of i3S.

### **A. Research Groups and Group Leaders**

1. The building blocks of the scientific organization of i3S are the Research Groups.
2. The activity of a Research Group is carried out under the guidance of its Group Leader, who bears full responsibility for its scientific activities and internal organization.
3. The i3S designation “Group Leader” is equivalent to the internationally used “Principal Investigator”, in indicating researchers with scientific autonomy, the ability to secure funds for his/her research, leading a team of investigators and supervising post-graduate students. In Portugal, Principal Investigator (*Investigador Principal*) is a rank in the research career (equivalent to Associate Professor in the academic career). At i3S, having reached a rank in either career track (academic or research) does not automatically entail recognition of research leadership.
4. Group Leaders must have an internationally competitive CV.
5. Group Leaders are responsible for securing sufficient external funding, to allow the financial independence of the Group during its entire lifespan.
6. The Research Groups must ensure that the financial support to cover overheads is promptly met.
7. In the context of FCT research units, an i3S Group Leader cannot be affiliated to another research unit in Portugal and his/her affiliation to i3S should be at least 30% of FTE.
8. Ideally, in order to allow continuity of objectives of a group the employment of its group leader should be secured for the whole duration of the group. However, this principle cannot be a pre-requisite for group constitution, because the duration of contracts in Portugal is variable. In order to ensure an acceptable degree of group stability, employment of new group leaders should be guaranteed for a minimum of two years with reasonable expectations of being renewed for another two years.
9. There is no minimum size for a research Group, provided the conditions of scientific excellence, leadership and self-sustainability are met. The maximum size is defined by the allocated laboratory space, taking into account the



aforementioned criteria together with space occupancy regulations (namely, safety and proper working conditions).

10. The procedure for constitution and evaluation of new research Groups is indicated in section D.
11. The performance of research Groups is evaluated every five years by external experts appointed by the External Advisory Board (EAB), as indicated in Section E.
12. Research Groups may be either internal or extramural to i3S. Only internal Groups will have space allocated. Extramural research groups are subjected to the same evaluation and decision procedures as for internal Groups.
13. The space allocated to a Research Group is based on criteria that are set in a separate document. Group Leaders must respect and comply with the allocated laboratory space map assigned by the i3S Director (after evaluation by an independent commission assembled for this purpose).

#### **B. Project Leaders**

Members of a Research Group, holding a PhD, may submit an application for external research funding, but should seek prior written support from the Group Leader. This will be communicated both to the Director of the i3S and the Director of the institute (IBMC, INEB or IPATIMUP) with which the applicant is affiliated. Funding of the salary of the applicant must be secured for the whole duration of the funding period of the application, for instance by inclusion of the salary in the project budget. The i3S designation for successful applicants is Project Leader.

#### **C. Role of the EAB in the evaluation of Research Groups**

1. The major mission of the EAB is to advise the Director and the BD of i3S on strategic issues.
2. The EAB will also supervise the process of evaluation of Research Groups and scientific platforms. For this purpose, the EAB will select external experts according to the nature of the Groups and platforms to be evaluated. Based on the reports provided by these experts the EAB will submit recommendations (e.g. approval, dissolution, reformulation of Groups and platforms) to the i3S Director.

#### **D. Procedures for constitution of a new Research Group**

1. The process of constituting a new Research Group starts with the submission of an application to the i3S Director containing the items indicated below (a-j). Applicants with less than 10 years of postdoctoral experience will be evaluated according to items b-c and f-i. However, if information regarding items d and e is available, it can also be included. Applicants with more than 10 years of postdoctoral experience will be assessed according to items b-d and f-l. If available, information regarding item e can also be included :



- a. Group designation.
- b. Full curriculum vitae of the proposed Group Leader.
- c. Scientific objectives and research plan for the next 5 years.
- d. Financial resources (running and approved projects, with indication of funding institution, budget and time frame).
- e. Team members (names and short CVs of PhD members; names of PhD students and thesis projects).
- f. Existing and planned collaborations.
- g. Proposal of activities in training, outreach and services to the community, if appropriate.
- h. Rationale for the integration in a specific i3S Research Program.
- i. Expected support from i3S.
- j. Suggestion of possible reviewers and conflict of interests.

2. Assessment of the proposal will include the following sequential steps:

- a. The Director's Office verifies if the application comprises all required elements.
- b. The i3S Director submits the application to the Restricted Scientific Commission (RSC) composed by the members of the Board of Directors (BD) and coordinators of the scientific programs.
- c. The RSC assesses the application, taking into account whether or not it is in line with i3S objectives and holds sufficient promise.
- d. After a seminar given by selected applicants, the RSC emits a recommendation on the appropriateness of the application, and whether it should be included in one of the 3 Research Programs of the i3S. This recommendation is then submitted to the i3S Board of Directors.
- e. Based on the recommendation by the RSC and their own assessment, the i3S Board of Directors reassesses the application and decides whether it merits to be submitted to assessment by the EAB.
- f. The EAB advises the i3S Director on the acceptance or refusal of the new Research Group and its integration in a specific Research Program. This advice is based on reports provided by independent experts selected by the EAB.
- g. The evaluation process is managed by the Director's office, which sends the letters of invitation (signed by the Director and the Chairman of the EAB), receives the evaluation reports and sends them to the Chairman of the EAB.
- h. Based on the recommendation by the EAB, the Director proposes and the Board of Directors (BD) decides on whether the Research Group will be created. On a positive outcome, the integration of the new Research Group in a specific Research Program is discussed with the coordinators of the scientific programs.
- i. The BD decision will be communicated to the applicant in writing and, if positive, will specify the space allocated to the Research Group and other conditions (e.g., for a new incoming Group Leader, installation funds, special conditions to access to scientific platforms and duration of the installation phase).



#### **E. Procedures for the evaluation of a Research Group**

1. For each proposal the evaluation process is conducted by at least two external experts selected by the EAB. According to the nature of the group
2. The calendar for the evaluation of Research Groups is established by the BD in consultation with the EAB Chairman.
3. A Research Group will be evaluated under the responsibility of the EAB, between the third and the fourth year after its installation at the i3S, and then every five years.
4. In case of need, a Research Group may be subjected to an *ad hoc* evaluation.
5. Research Group evaluation will be carried out taking into account:
  - a. Scientific relevance to the objectives and mission of i3S
  - b. Scientific productivity
  - c. Fund raising capacity (national and international competitive funds)
  - d. Training activity (post-Doc, PhD, master students, participation in graduate programs, advanced training)
  - e. Knowledge transfer
  - f. Dissemination of science
6. Based on the reports by external experts the EAB makes a recommendation on the on changes that may be required. The recommendation is submitted to the i3S Director, who submits this for pre-advice to the RSC. The Director submits a proposal to the BD, who decides on the changes to be taken and the time frame for them to be implemented.
7. The decision to discontinue a Group should be taken after failure to accomplish the changes that were decided by the BD in the set time frame (point 6 above). A one-year notice should be given for discontinuation or, if shorter, agreed with the Group Leader. In this case, the Group concerned will provide, within 3 months, a resolution plan with a time line. This will be assessed and decided upon by the BD.

i3S Board of Directors

10 November 2020