



CRIS Excellence Programme Call for Applications 2021:

Introduction

In the development of new therapies, it is essential to have scientists and doctors with translational training who can make a real impact in the treatment and management of patients. Their first-hand knowledge of clinical practice and hands-on experience with patients, combined with their in-depth understanding of scientific research, means that these professionals offer great potential to develop new treatments and therapies. Unfortunately, this profile is hard to find, for different reasons:

- A scientific career is a limitation when it comes to finding a job that is paid in accordance with a person's merits.
- There are few training programmes for doctor-researchers. Doctors and researchers require specific training, and it is difficult to achieve this combination.
- Young scientists encounter limitations when it comes to translating their hypotheses into clinical practice due to the lack of multidisciplinary programmes in institutions dedicated to cancer research.

The **CRIS Excellence Programme** hopes that this type of researcher will lead the creation of internationally important research groups.

- To promote the development of research by outstanding physicians and researchers in cancer research programmes
- To ensure these researchers have the support they need to develop independence and creativity.
- To turn these professionals into elite doctor-researchers, able to develop transformative research.
- To allow these kinds of researchers to drive the transformation of their host hospitals and research institutions into world-leading centres.
- To provide competitive financial conditions and incentives to stabilise their careers in Spain.

Call for Applications

Every year, the CRIS Cancer Foundation offers 2 grants as part of its **CRIS Excellence Programme**. The third call for applications to this programme will take place over the course of 2021. This programme offers grants for between 2 and 5 years. The duration of the grant shall be determined via regular assessments of the recipient throughout the duration of the programme.

This programme is open to:

- Scientists and clinical investigators of any nationality who wish to develop their scientific and/or medical activity in Spain. The research team must be located in Spain.



- The candidate does not necessarily have to be employed by the host institution at the time of application. However, the institution must issue a letter agreeing that the candidate may develop their activities there.
- Applications must be submitted by the candidate, who will hold ultimate scientific responsibility, supported by the host institution.
- Candidates must have received their first PhD between 2 and 15 years prior to the year in which this call is published.
- This period since receiving their doctorate can be extended should any of the circumstances set out in the Observations section at the end of this document apply.
- With the support of the host institution, candidates should devote a minimum of 60% of their research time to this project.
- In the case of doctor-researchers with a care workload, the latter may not exceed 50% of their working day.

The programme will become effective when the candidate and the research centre sign an employment contract. Beneficiaries must join and/or accept their place on the programme between 1 February and 30 June 2022. Under duly justified circumstances, their incorporation may be delayed until 31 December 2022. The start date must be communicated to the CRIS Cancer Foundation prior to that date.

The programme runs for two years and may be renewed for a further three years up to a maximum of five years, provided that the progress reports, requested annually, and the mid-term evaluation, carried out after the second year, are favourable.

The call for applications opens on **1 April 2021** and closes on **31 May 2021** at midnight (Central European Time - CET).

Programme resources

The maximum grant awarded will be **€ 1,250,000**, which will be spread over five annual instalments of up to €250,000 a year.

Five maximum annual instalments of €250,000, which include:

- a. **Salary:** Maximum of €70,000 gross to cover the total costs of employing the researcher incurred by the host institution or hospital. This amount includes Social Security contributions and any other amounts payable by the host institution or hospital, as well as the gross remuneration of the beneficiary.
- b. In the event that the candidate is already employed at the host centre, the financial subsidy may be used as:



- **Supplementary salary** up to a maximum of €70,000 per annum. In the event that the candidate is part of a programme to attract talent such as the Ramón y Cajal, Juan de la Cierva, Juan Rodés, Río Hortega or Miguel Servet programmes, there is a possibility to supplement their salary up to €70,000 and devote the rest to cover costs associated with the project.
- **Intensification of their working day** in their working hours in order to develop research in the case of a doctor in a hospital.
- c. **Costs associated with the research project**, including:
 - Recruitment of staff linked to the development of the project.
 - Acquisition and maintenance of scientific equipment and consumables.
 - Travel costs and associated expenses, registration fees at congresses, seminars, and scientific conferences.
 - Management costs for industrial and intellectual property rights related to the project, costs of patents.
 - Other expenses related to the development of the project.
- d. Financial assistance of €5,400 to cover the **cost of relocating** to the city at the start of the programme, for beneficiaries who are joining a new centre from another city. These funds are deducted from the costs associated with the project.
- e. **Family support** of €1200 gross per annum for each of the researcher's dependent children. Family support will be determined on the date the researcher joins the centre and will be reviewed annually at the time of programme renewal. These funds are deducted from the costs associated with the project.

In the event that the candidate is a new member of staff and receives the full gross salary of €70,000, the funds available for project costs will be for a maximum of €180,000. In the event that the candidate receives a salary supplement or intensification of their working hours, this maximum will be €250,000 (the cost of the intensification or supplement).

This subsidy will be managed by the centre on behalf of the beneficiary and must be justified independently.

These amounts will be subject to the corresponding legal tax retention.

The CRIS Cancer Foundation will sign an agreement with the host institution, which will receive the financial subsidy directly and be responsible for covering all the costs related to the project.

The contractual relationship between the beneficiary and the research centre shall comply with the legal provisions in force at any given time.

The named recipient or beneficiary of the programme shall be the researcher, who shall be recruited by the host institution.



Requirements for applicants

Training

Applications will be accepted from **specialist clinicians and scientists** who have **completed a Doctorate between 2 and 15 years prior** to the year of the call for applications. The date on which the candidate defended their PhD thesis will be taken as the date on which they completed their PhD and earned the title of doctor. Therefore, a document must be provided that accredits the date on which the candidate defended their thesis. In the event that the applicant holds more than one doctorate, the above period will be calculated on the basis of the first title obtained.

These periods can be extended should any of the circumstances described in the “Observations” section apply, provided they are suitably accredited and documented.

Research Career

The candidate must have **at least 15 publications in scientific journals and must be the lead author for 3 such publications in Q1 journals**. Only articles with a Pubmed ID will be considered. The classification of the journal in the first quartile will be verified using the 2020 Journal of Citation Report list as the criterion. When calculating the total number of publications, abstracts from congresses shall not be taken into account, neither will preprints, articles submitted or in review, or book chapters. In addition, extra consideration will be given to candidates who have authored at least one patent.

Project

Candidates must provide an overview of the research strand associated with the call for applications and which will be the object of the funding associated with the programme. The project should demonstrate a high level of scientific and technical quality.

Mentor (optional)

The candidate may propose a mentor for the research project at the host institution and provide information about their background along with the application. The mentor should support and facilitate the professional development of the researcher and the project at the institution.

Nationality

The **CRIS Excellence Programme** is open to post-doctoral researchers of all nationalities.

Restrictions

The following restrictions apply to the submission of applications:



- A researcher may only be a beneficiary of one **CRIS Excellence Programme** at the same time. They may only re-apply following completion of the previous programme.
- Only Hospitals, universities, and research centres in Spain can be the beneficiary of the **CRIS Excellence Programme**.
- For each call there can only be one beneficiary of this programme per institution.
- The candidate's care workload may not under any circumstances exceed 50% of their working day.
- Members of the scientific evaluation board will not be able to apply for these programmes.
- If an applicant has been rejected previously due to a lack of scientific integrity, they may not reapply.

Documentation required for the application

Candidates or their institutions can access the **CRIS Excellence Programme** call for applications at www.criscancer.org/programascris. All applications must be completed on-line using the app, which will be made available to candidates at www.criscancer.org/programascris during the application submission period for the 2021 programme. Applicants must register as users on the app, which will send them email confirmation allowing them to access their application.

All applications must provide three blocks of documentation, which **must be completed entirely in English**.

Part A: Administrative Form

Part B: Details about the project

Part C: Documentation

Part A: Administrative Form

This questionnaire is accessed through the application on the candidate website. You will not be able to fill in the rest of the documentation without first completing this form. This section must be filled out entirely in English.

The form includes the following elements:

- a. **General information about the candidate:** First and last name, identification document, year of birth, academic qualification, and contact details.
- b. **(optional) Details of the Mentor:** First and last name, institution, and contact details.
- c. **Details about the host institution:** Name and address
- d. **Details of the Research Project:** Title, code, research area, type of cancer, topic, duration, and estimated total budget.



- e. Description of training and experience in the area of research.

Part B: Details of the Project

This section must be filled out entirely in English. The form includes the following elements:

- a. Title, institution, name of mentor and acronym of the candidacy
- b. Abstract of the project and keywords.
- c. Background, hypothesis, objectives, methodology, project description, duration, and work plan
- d. Project resources and budget
- e. Expected impact of the proposed research.
- f. Project timeline.

Part C: Documentation

The templates for several of the documents in this section are provided on the candidacy website and the app itself. These templates must be used; any other format will not be accepted. Each page will have a header indicating the name of the candidate and an acronym for their candidacy. This section must be filled out entirely in English. None of the documents may exceed 4 Mb in size.

- a. **Curriculum vitae** of the candidate using a standardised summarised format (**CVA**), following an abbreviated template of standard forms for public calls for applications (<https://cvn.fecyt.es/>). This document must be provided in English.
- b. **Doctoral certificate** and the date on which the candidates defended their PhDs. If you do not have this certificate, you must provide an official document stating the date on which the doctorate was awarded.
- c. **Letter of acceptance from the host institution** signed by the managing director or scientific director of the centre guaranteeing institutional support for the researcher and the research strand of the particular project. This document is indispensable for a candidacy to be validated. The provided template must be used.
- d. (optional) **Letter of acceptance from the Mentor** pledging to support the future development of the candidate's research activity in the project area and at the proposed institution. The provided template must be used.
- e. **Declaration on ethical issues**. The template provided must be used.
- f. **Candidate's track record**, reflecting key events in the researcher's career. The provided template must be used. (Maximum 3 pages)
- g. **Experience related to the project**. This document should reflect the candidate's experience in the field of study. The template provided must be used. (Maximum 2 pages)
- h. **Research Project Report**. The details of this document are set out below. The provided template must be used (Maximum 15 pages).
- i. **Project budget**. Candidates should take into account that 5% of the total funding awarded will be deducted by the institution for indirect costs and management expenses. An economic audit at the end of the project may be included in the budget.



- j. If you have requested an **extension for the validity of your candidacy** on account of matters such as illness, parental leave, military service, or other causes, you must attach documentation that accredits such circumstances. The accepted circumstances are indicated in the Observations section, at the end of this document.

The requested documents must be submitted as scanned copies in PDF format. These documents may be provided in the language in which they were issued, but if they are in a language other than English or Spanish, they must be accompanied by a certified translation.

About the Research Project Report: The template provided must be used, and the report must not exceed 15 pages. The format of the text should be as follows:

- Din A4.
- Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica.
- Font size 11 or 12.
- Single line spacing.
- Margins: 2 cm on either side.

The candidates selected as beneficiaries shall be given a reasonable amount of time to confirm their interest in the centre or unit they indicated as their first option. During this time, they will also be able to explore alternative possibilities that might be better suited to their personal project. However, they must inform the CRIS Cancer Foundation of these changes and obtain its agreement.

In any case, the research strand selected by the candidate to carry out their research project, if different from the area stipulated originally in their application, must not be too far removed from their initial preference, in terms of content, field or discipline. They must inform the CRIS Cancer Foundation of these changes and obtain its agreement.

Documents uploaded to the app in PDF format must be clear and legible. In addition, each page of the original document must correspond to a page of the PDF document.

Should the candidates or their institutions have any questions, they can visit the **CRIS Excellence Programme** webpage or email convocatorias@criscancer.org.

Selection process

The selection process is designed to identify outstanding candidates regardless of their origin, gender, nationality, or other aspects that could skew the selection. The goal is to ensure transparency, fairness, and impartiality throughout the process.

The members of the screening and selection committee choose candidates who, according to their own criteria, provide evidence of the greatest merits and abilities.

Stages of evaluation and expert panels



All applications that meet the necessary conditions will be evaluated by expert scientists. There are three rounds of evaluation:

1. Administrative Evaluation: When evaluating eligibility, all applications received will be evaluated, and those that do not meet the criteria set out in the terms and conditions of the call for applications will be rejected. There will then be a period during which any outstanding documentation will be requested, or any corrections or clarifications should be made.

All rejected applications will receive an email detailing the reason for rejection.

2. Second Evaluation: A second round will be screened by a panel of experts, different from the third evaluation. Each candidacy shall be reviewed by two different evaluators. These applications will go through to the final evaluation stage.

Candidacies shall be evaluated in accordance with the criteria specified below in the section on [General evaluation criteria](#).

A score from 1-100 will be awarded.

The 10 highest scoring applications or those in the top-scoring 20% will go onto the final evaluation stage.

At the end of this evaluation stage, all candidates that have gone through to the next round will be contacted via e-mail.

3. Final Evaluation: The [CRIS International Scientific Committee](#) will be in charge of the final phase of the evaluation process and will be composed of scientists from various disciplines of maximum international impact. This panel will be published after the programme beneficiaries have been announced.

The evaluation committee shall consist of a Chairperson and seven other members participating in the evaluation, a representative of CRIS, and the technical secretary of the committee.

The evaluation committee shall receive the finalist applications, which shall be evaluated in accordance with the criteria specified below in the section on [General evaluation criteria](#). Applications will be awarded a score between 1-100. This score is independent of the score obtained in the second stage of evaluation.

The evaluation committee will meet to examine the candidates put forward, discuss the most relevant aspects of the project, and prepare the questions to be asked during the interview phase of the candidates selected for interview.

The 5 best candidates will be given an online **interview** by the evaluators. The criteria applied in this interview are set out in the [General evaluation criteria](#):



Candidates who are offered an interview should take into account the following:

- Interviews will last about 15 minutes.
- Candidates must summarise their research project in 2 minutes.
- They will be asked questions related to their career and the project, their capacity to develop the proposal, additional resources, etc.
- The candidate must respect the confidentiality and identity of the evaluators that participate in the interview session.

The **Technical Secretary**, in addition to coordinating and monitoring the evaluation process, will perform the following tasks:

- Distribute the candidacies to the evaluators taking into account the expertise of each evaluator and the research area of the candidate.
- Ensure that each evaluator prepares a summary evaluation report for each application received.
- Ensure the evaluators who participate in the evaluation process do not present a conflict of interest with the candidates.
- Draw up a final report. The evaluation committee will meet at the end of the evaluation process and draw up a report listing the chosen candidates.

The best candidates evaluated in this interview stage will be selected for the **CRIS Excellence Programme**.

All candidates who make it into the last assessment round will be notified of the comments resulting from the final discussions of the **International Scientific Committee**.

General evaluation criteria

In general, two main questions will be taken into account to ensure the excellence of the candidates: the quality, innovation, and potential of the project; and the capability, creativity, and potential of the candidate.

1. Researcher - Capability, experience, and creativity: 45 points

- a. To what extent has the candidate demonstrated sufficient capacity to conduct disruptive research?
- b. To what extent has the candidate provided evidence of independent creative thinking?
- c. Evaluation of previous publications in the relevant strand of research and new strands. Do they represent significant progress in their field?
- d. Intellectual property rights related to their research: patents and transfer.
- e. Experience in training up new researchers.



2. Research project: 35 points

- a. Is it an innovative and transformative project?
- b. To what extent does the scientific approach outlined take into account the fact that scientific research is high risk/high reward?
- c. To what extent are the proposed methodology and operating system suitable for the achievement of the objectives set out?
- d. To what extent are the timescale, resources, and commitment of the candidate appropriate and justifiable?

3. Host institution: 5 points

- a. To what extent is the centre a suitable place to develop the research project?
- b. To what extent is the mentor able to support and guide the scientific and professional development of the researcher?

4. CRIS scientific strategy: 15 points

- a. This section will assess whether the project is properly aligned with the scientific strategy of the CRIS Cancer Foundation and CRIS centres of excellence. This strategy can be downloaded from www.criscancer.org/programascris and will also be accessible to the candidates through the app.

Appeals

Following notification of rejection, there will be a period of 10 calendar days in which candidates may lodge an appeal through the platform or via e-mail to convocatorias@criscancer.org.

The appeals procedure will be strictly confidential and will not result in a scientific re-evaluation by the panel. The independence and objectivity of the assessment is guaranteed by the selection and evaluation process.

Any appeals submitted shall be resolved by an Appeals Committee, which shall notify the candidate of its findings by e-mail within 30 calendar days from the date the appeal is received.

Appointment

The list of Beneficiaries chosen by means of the Evaluation Stage shall be published on the website of the CRIS Cancer Foundation in the **CRIS Excellence Programme** section, as of 31 December 2021.



In the event that the chosen beneficiaries decide not to take part in the programme, the respective grant shall be awarded to the next highest-scoring candidate as ranked by the Final Evaluation Committee.

The Final Evaluation Committee and the CRIS Cancer Foundation reserve the right to declare a post null and void, in the event that none of the highest-scoring candidates fulfils the requirements of the programme.

The beneficiaries must begin work at their respective centre by 30 June 2021 at the latest. Under duly justified cases, if the proper documentation has been provided, this date can be delayed by up to 6 months. If this deadline is not respected, the funding will not be released for the programme.

Once the contract is in place, the project could be transferred to another institution. A formal transfer request must be submitted along with all the documentation requested in the terms and conditions of the call for applications, in addition to an official acceptance from new host centre. The CRIS Cancer Foundation must evaluate the transfer request and issue its approval.

Incompatibilities

Candidates must run the research project in person, at the host research centre. Clinical practice and research must be carried out on a full-time basis at the host research centre.

The candidate may perform teaching activities, provided they notify the CRIS Cancer Foundation, and such activities are for a maximum of 80 hours per year.

Any chosen candidates who decide not to take part in the programme may not reapply to subsequent programmes unless their reasons are duly justified and documented.

Any candidates who have been in contact with any member of the evaluation committee regarding issues related to the programme will be immediately excluded from the process and will not be able to reapply in the future.

Taking part in this programme is not compatible with a permanent employment contract at any other institution other than the host centre.

Any breach of ethical considerations will lead to immediate termination of funding and said individual will not be allowed to reapply to the programme.



Obligations

The beneficiary shall undertake to collaborate in communication activities and events organised by the Foundation related to these programmes.

Except for reasons of force majeure, the recipients will undertake to attend the official awards ceremony for the Programmes.

The host institution receiving the candidate will manage and administer the funds allocated annually by the CRIS Cancer Foundation to this programme.

The CRIS Cancer Foundation will request from the host institution a detailed economic report breaking down the costs of activities carried out by the candidate. This report is required annually and at the end of the programme.

At any time, the CRIS Cancer Foundation reserves the right to request accreditation, asking the candidate to provide the original documents or certified copies of any document indicated in the application or curriculum.

The candidate must submit annually a scientific-technical report in relation to the development of the project. The report submitted after the 2nd-year point will be evaluated for funding to continue.

At the end of the programme, candidates must submit an economic audit report justifying the allocation of this funding. This amount can be included in the candidate's budget.

Data protection and privacy

The CRIS Cancer Foundation fully complies with current legislation on the protection of personal data.

The personal data of the researchers or any other individual listed in the application documents will be incorporated onto the CRIS database and will only be used for the evaluation of proposals. By submitting an application, the participant agrees for information about the Project to be incorporated onto the CRIS database.

For the application and programme evaluation procedure to be conducted, anyone who submits an application will need to provide their personal data for incorporation onto our database. The purpose of this is to send out notifications concerning the programme and application procedure.

To learn more about the transfer of data and how applicants may exercise their rights, you may request additional information by e-mailing convocatorias@criscancer.org and you may also exercise your rights of access, correction, or erasure of your personal data, as well as limit or oppose the processing of said data.



Observations

The timeframes and times contained in these terms and conditions are understood to refer to mainland Spain (Central European Time CET).

The period for obtaining the doctorate can be extended in the event that any of the following situations is duly accredited:

- Maternity/paternity leave following childbirth, permanent adoption, or foster care (provided that the date of birth or judicial/administrative resolution occurred during the scientific career of the candidate, stipulated in the terms and conditions). A 1-year extension will be applied for each child.
- Temporary disability during pregnancy for related reasons. The extension that will be applied corresponds to the period justified by means of the appropriate documentation.
- Temporary disability due to other causes. The extension that will be applied corresponds to the period justified by means of the appropriate documentation.
- Exemptions or reductions in the candidate's working hours due to family illness, dependency, gender-based violence, or terrorist violence. The extension that will be applied corresponds to the period justified by means of the appropriate documentation.
- In the case of non-Spanish candidates, participation in compulsory military service. The extension that will be applied corresponds to the period justified by means of the appropriate documentation.

The submission of an application to this programme presupposes the candidate's express acceptance of these terms and conditions, as well as the criteria and decisions adopted by the CRIS Cancer Foundation regarding any queries in the interpretation of the requirements and conditions set forth herein.

If the candidate is found to have breached the terms and conditions set out herein, regardless of when this occurs or which stage of the application process or programme the candidate has reached, their candidacy shall be terminated, and any funding granted will be revoked. In the event that the beneficiary does not comply with the aforementioned commitments - or any others included in the conditions indicated herein-, the CRIS Cancer Foundation reserves the right to proceed as appropriate, and even request that the beneficiary repays any funding received.

The host institution shall deduct 5% of the budget for indirect costs and management expenses from the total funding awarded.