



SIMONE & PIERRE CLERDENT FOUNDATION

2024 Scientific Award in Human Neurological Disorders

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

Table of contents

Introduction	2
Context	2
Objective and Scope of The Award	2
Main Features of The Award.....	2
Schedule of the call	3
How to apply?	3
Application Process	3
Eligibility Criteria.....	4
Evaluation process.....	5
Selection principles	5
Evaluation process.....	5
Evaluation criteria	6
Scoring scale	6
Final decision	7
Research integrity	7
Open Science	7
Ethics.....	7
Contact information.....	8

Introduction

Context

The Simone and Pierre Clerdent Foundation was created as a Foundation of Public Utility in 2006. Its head office is located in the Neurology Department of Liège University Hospital and is administered by a Board of Trustees of 8 persons.

The Foundation has been incepted by the Count Pierre Clerdent, former Governor of the Province of Liège, with the objective to promote and support medical research in human neurology.

To this end, the Foundation grants research projects conducted in the field of human neurological disorders by Principal Investigators based in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Objective and Scope of The Award

The Clerdent Scientific Award is granted to independent investigators to conduct basic, translational or clinical research in human neurology in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels of Belgium and to consolidate their research team and program.

The awarded project must aim at better understanding the biological basis, improving diagnosis, or advancing the treatment of nervous system pathologies. Research can encompass all stages from bench to bedside.

Main Features of The Award

- **Funding:**

The Award amounts to 400.000€ and aims at supporting a 3-year research project. The yearly-required amount will be transferred anticipatively each year on the university or the university hospital bank account of the laureate.

- **Reporting:**

The beneficiary of the Award is required to submit a mid-term scientific, financial and communication report at the latest eighteen (18) months after the start of the project. Continued support to the beneficiary's research project will be subject to the positive evaluation of this mid-term report. In case of negative evaluation, the support will be discontinued.

The beneficiary of the Award is also requested to submit a final report at the latest two months after the end of the project.

- **Eligible Expenses:**

Eligible expenses encompass personnel costs, operating costs, and equipment. However, the Award cannot be used for travel purposes.

- **Overheads:**

The beneficiary of the Award is responsible for taking the necessary steps to benefit from the price net of all overhead costs retained by the institution to which he/she belongs.

- **Portability:**

The beneficiary can retain the benefit of the Award if he/she transfers his/her research activities to another eligible institution. The Award cannot follow the laureate if he/she transfers his/her research activity to a private company or outside the Federation Wallonia-Brussels.

Schedule of the call

- Opening of the call: 18 December 2023
- Deadline of the call: 29 February 2024
- Panel meeting: 27 May 2024
- Award ceremony: October 2024
- Start of the research project: 1 November 2024

How to apply?

Application Process

Applications must be submitted in English via the FNRS web-based application platform “e-space” (<https://e-space.frs-fnrs.be>) before next **Thursday 29th February 2024** at 14.00 (Brussels time).

- **e-space platform:**

“e-space” is an integrated information system enabling:

- Researchers to submit their applications and ensure their scientific and administrative follow-up.
- Experts and members of Scientific Committees and Juries to perform their evaluation.

It allows the storage, processing and circulation of relevant information within the organisation and among various stakeholders.

Before applying, researchers must first create an account or use the one they already have in case they already are registered.

A « save and continue » module allows the Applicants to quit the system and to come back working on their application at a later stage.

- **Application file:**

The complete application file is composed of:

- The administrative part
- The scientific part
- The supporting documentation

The creation as well as the submission of an application is acknowledged via an automatic notification.

All applications will be double-checked to ensure that all eligibility criteria are met before being processed to the evaluation stage.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Principal Investigators:**

- Applicants must be established investigators of any nationality with a permanent and full-time contract in a University or an academic University Hospital of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.
- Applicants must have a scientific seniority of min. PhD + 6 years and not reach the retirement age during the project. Scientific seniority is calculated from the PhD public defence onwards, not considering career breaks.

- **Host Institutions:**

The research project must be conducted in one of the following Universities or academic University Hospitals of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation:

- Université Catholique de Louvain
- Université de Liège
- Université de Bruxelles
- Université de Mons
- Université de Namur
- CHU de Liège
- Hôpital Erasme
- CU Saint Luc

- **National/international cooperation:**

The project may include the collaboration with research teams based outside the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (WBF). In such case, the Principal Investigator working in the WBF must remain the coordinator of the project and no more than 49% of the costs may be outsourced to co-promoters working outside the WBF.

Evaluation process

Selection principles

The selection process follows the highest international standards in terms of fairness, transparency, impartiality, consistency, and independence in order to identify the best research project irrespective of gender, age, beliefs, nationality of the PI.

It is based on a two-step evaluation procedure performed by an International Panel of experts.

Evaluation process

- **Panel experts**

The Panel is composed of non-Belgian high-level experts working outside Belgium with different profiles to ensure a broad coverage of the scientific spectrum pertaining to human neurological disorders.

The Panel is gender-balanced, independent and composed of 7 members with broad geographical coverage. Its composition will be disclosed after the Award ceremony.

Each Panel member will sign a non-disclosure and a data protection agreement as well as a non-conflict of interest form. Their evaluation will be anonymised.

Panel members will be acting as:

- Rapporteurs: responsible for scoring and commenting applications prior to the Panel meeting and introducing the application during the Panel meeting.
- Readers: responsible for reading the applications prior to the Panel meeting and commenting the application during the Panel meeting.

- **Remote evaluation phase**

Prior to the Panel meeting, each application will be remotely scored and commented by 2 rapporteurs and read by the 5 other members.

The remote evaluation is performed in a simple blind mode (i.e., the experts will know the identity of Applicants but not the other Panel members' identity).

The FNRS administration will merge all scores and comments in a consolidated scores sheet.

- **Panel meeting**

The Panel gathers online.

During the Panel meeting each application will be introduced by their rapporteurs and collegially discussed during a tour de table with a double objective of identifying a laureate and drafting Evaluation Summary Reports.

The Panel takes its decision preferably via consensus or, if it cannot be reached, via a simple majority vote of attending members, each experts having one vote.

An observer from the "Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation" with no voting rights may attend the Panel meeting.

- **Feedback to Applicants**

All Applicants will receive feedback on the evaluation of their application under the format of an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

The ESRs will be drafted by the rapporteurs on basis of their comments and the Panel discussions. All ESR will be anonymised and validated by the Chair of the Panel. They will contain comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the research project as well as a global comment with no reference to score nor ranking.

No redress procedure is foreseen.

The laureate will be contacted by the "Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation", but his/her identity will remain confidential until the Award ceremony.

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation of applications will be made using the following evaluation criteria:

- 40% Principal Investigator (CV and publications, international recognition, main research achievements),
- 40% Research Project (feasibility, originality, methodology, design of the study, data treatment and management),
- 10% Research Environment (including international network),
- 10% Potential impact (for science, health professionals, patients, society).

Scoring scale

The scoring will be made using the following scale ranging from A+ to C:

- A+: **exceptional**
- A: **excellent**
- A-: **very good**
- B+: **good**
- B: **average**
- B-: **weak**
- C: **insufficient**

These scores may be translated into percentages and will range from 100% to 70%.

Final decision

The Award will be granted by the Steering Committee of the “Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation” on basis of the recommendation of the international Panel.

Research integrity

Research integrity is of utmost importance. All experts involved in the evaluation process will be notified and asked to pay specific attention to scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of data. The evaluation of the mid-term report will also be an opportunity to check on it.

Funded researchers are expected to strictly comply to all institutional rules and regulations that apply in terms of research integrity. In case of integrity breach suspicion or allegation, the “Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation” will take appropriate measures.

Open Science

The scientific outputs stemming from research supported by the Scientific Award in Human Neurological Disorders should be valorised to maximise societal benefits.

To this end the “Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation” supports the publication in Open Access, with a preference for the deposit requirement of publications resulting from the funded project (Green Open access).

The facilitation of the free access to these research outputs not only aims at the benefit of the scientific community but is also meant to increase both national and international visibility of the researchers.

Ethics

Research projects may require prior consideration of ethical problems that might arise or that are inherent to the submitted research project. The possible ethical problems may relate to the use and storage of private data, the handling of substances that may cause environmental or biodiversity damage and the research on animals or human beings (non-exhaustive list).

It will be the responsibility of the laureate of the Award to submit an ethical clearance provided by their local ethics committee to the “Simone & Pierre Clerdent Foundation” (if the project raises any ethical issues). This process is aimed at ensuring that all the research and innovation activities under this Award comply with ethics principles and relevant national and international legislation.

Failing to provide this ethical clearance may lead to the cancelation of the Award.

Contact information

The Simone and Pierre Clerdent Foundation was created as a Foundation of Public Utility in 2006. It has been incepted by the Count Pierre Clerdent, former Governor of the Province of Liège, with the objective to promote and support medical research in human neurology.

- **For more information on the Simone and Pierre Clerdent Foundation and its Award**, please contact:

M. Gustave Moonen, Professor

G.Moonen@uliege.be

The Fund for Scientific Research-FNRS is the operator of the Clerdent Foundation Scientific Award. Incepted in 1928, its mission is to support basic research in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium. Among its manifold activities, it manages around 30 scientific instruments sponsored by private Patrons under the umbrella brand of FNRS.awards.

- **For more information on the call of the Clerdent Foundation Scientific Award**, please contact:

M. Bruno Moraux, Head of Unit

prix@frs-fnrs.be

- **For any question pertaining to e-space and/or the application process**, please contact:

M. François Corbisier, Head of Unit

e-space@frs-fnrs.be