

Application guidelines

Table of Contents

Eligibility	3
Application process	8
Selection process	9
Benefits	11
Annex – EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowships: links	15

PLEASE NOTE: the guidelines are updated periodically. Please ensure you are reading the latest version.

EMBC Member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and United Kingdom

EMBC/EMBO global partners: Chile, India, Singapore, Taiwan

EMBO subject areas: Cell Cycle, Cell & Tissue Architecture, Cellular Metabolism, Chromatin & Transcription, Development, Differentiation & Death, Evolution & Ecology, Genome Stability & Dynamics, Genomic & Computational Biology, Immunology, Membranes & Transport, Microbiology, Virology & Pathogens, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, Plant Biology, Proteins & Biochemistry, RNA, Signal Transduction, Structural Biology & Biophysics, Systems Biology

Contact: fellowships@embo.org

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Eligibility

Applications are accepted from candidates who meet the following criteria:

PhD degree

Applicants must hold a PhD degree or equivalent at the start of the fellowship, but not necessarily at the time the application is submitted.

Applicants who already hold a PhD degree are eligible if they obtained their PhD degree within the two years preceding the application submission date.

Exceptions to this rule are made for applicants with career breaks during the relevant period due to:

- parental leave: female scientists are given an extension of one year per child, and male scientists are given an extension to account for paternal leave (three months per child or the total amount of paternal leave taken, whichever is greater).
- mandatory military/civil service in which case the applicant needs to provide documentation proving the service.

Additional exceptions might be made on a case-by-case basis for extraordinary personal circumstances, such as demonstrable severe illness or full-time care of an ill family member. The Fellowship office reserves the right to request the appropriate documentation. No exceptions will be made for other types of voluntary career breaks. The applicant must contact the Fellowship office prior to the submission of the application to obtain an exception, no matter what type. **Applications submitted without prior approval of an exception will be deemed ineligible.**

Candidates with a medical degree (M.D.) may be eligible to apply for an EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship provided they hold a PhD (MD-PhD programme), in which case, the rules explained above apply. Candidates that don't have a PhD but have equivalent research experience to a PhD and meet all other eligibility criteria, should enquire with the EMBO Fellowship office prior to submission.

PLEASE NOTE: the Fellowship Office uses the **SUBMISSION date** of the application for assessment of the eligibility criteria like PhD title for less than 2 years. The Spring and Autumn cutoff deadlines (4th Friday of January, 2PM CET, and second Friday of July, 2PM CEST, respectively) do not play a role in this eligibility check.

Publications

Applicants must have at least one first (or joint first) author primary research paper accepted for publication or published in an international peer reviewed journal at the time the application is submitted. For papers not yet published but “accepted”, “accepted in principle”, “accepted for publication” or similar status, send a copy of the editorial letter proving the

status of the paper to fellowships@embo.org **before submitting the application**. In the letter it must be clear that the applicant is the first (or co-first) author.

A first author preprint with public in-depth peer reviews is also sufficient for eligibility, provided all the following conditions are met:

1. The preprint is posted on a recognized community preprint server such as Arxiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, Zenodo;
2. the peer reviews must be publicly available online;
3. the peer reviews need to be verifiably obtained from an independent preprint peer review service such as "*Peer Community In*", "*Review Commons*" and provide an in-depth expert analysis of the rigor and validity of the research and its contribution to the field.

IMPORTANT:

Reviewers' comments obtained in a regular publication process, as well as individual comments or feedback pasted online by the author(s) on the pre-print server are not accepted since their authenticity is not verifiable.

Examples:

Bénitière F, Necsulea A, Duret L (2023). AX1BP1 recruits ATG9 vesicles through SCAMP3 binding. *bioRxiv* <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.12.09.519597> peer reviewed by *PCI Evolution* <https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.evolbiol.100642>

Hama Y, Kurikawa Y, Matsui T, Mizushima N, Yamamoto H (2023). TAX1BP1 recruits ATG9 vesicles through SCAMP3 binding. *bioRxiv* <https://doi.org/10.1101/2023.08.18.553817> peer reviewed by *Review Commons* <https://reviewcommons.org/eeb/10.1101/2023.08.18.553817>

The following items should **not** be listed as publications:

- Papers submitted or in preparation.
- Papers published in non-English language.
- Abstracts of presentations at conferences

EMBO will consider primary research papers published on preprint servers without reviewers' comment, but a first-author publication in an international peer-reviewed journal or a first author **refereed** preprint is still a requirement. Similarly, reviews, comments, book chapters, instruction-based methods papers or videos and patents can be listed where appropriate but are not considered primary research publications. Papers describing in detail the development of a **new** protocol to answer a specific biological question **may** count as first-author papers. Contact the Fellowship office in case of doubt.

Do NOT indicate the journal impact factor or any other metrics, commentaries, highlights or citations in the publication list. EMBO is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, <https://sfdora.org>), which recommends "not to use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions".

Publication updates after the application is submitted are not allowed. In case of publication updates prior to the selection process, the application must be withdrawn and re-submitted with eligibility rules counting at time of re-submission (see also APPLICATION PROCESS).

Mobility

EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowships are intended to promote international exchange. **All applications must involve a change of country.**

a) Applications to work in an EMBC Member State

Applicants, regardless of their nationality or the country in which they obtained their PhD, can apply for an EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship to work in any EMBC Member State provided there is international mobility (see list of EMBC Member States on page two).

b) Applications to work in an EMBC/EMBO global partners

Applicants who wish to work in an EMBC/EMBO global partners are eligible if they move from, are nationals of and have performed their PhD in

- an EMBC Member State or
- an EMBC/EMBO global partners

c) Applications to work in a Non-EMBC Member State

Applicants who wish to work in a Non-EMBC Member State must meet **all** the following requirements:

- must move from an EMBC Member State,
- must be nationals of an EMBC Member State
- must have performed their PhD in one of the EMBC Member States.

A maximum of 30% of fellowships are awarded in this category (c).

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) Applicants that move to the country where the host institute is located (independently if this is a EMBC Member State, a EMBC/EMBO global partners or non-EMBC member State) are eligible if the applicant has been living or working for a **maximum of six months in that country during the previous 18 months** counting back from the time the application is submitted.
- 2) Similarly, candidates can apply if they have already started working at the host laboratory, but only if they have been working or living in the host country for a **maximum of six months** at the time the application is submitted. This includes candidates that started working with the host supervisor and then moved with the host supervisor to a different location: here the relevant start date will be the date the candidate started in the host laboratory. Please note that the maximum stay of six months in the country where the host institute is located within the last 18 months as listed above (1) takes precedence.

The Fellowship Office will take into consideration **ONLY** the SUBMISSION date of the application to run the above-mentioned mobility and temporal checks. The Spring and Autumn cutoff deadlines (4th Friday of January, 2PM CET, and second Friday of July, 2PM CEST, respectively) do not play a role in this eligibility check.

Further mobility rules

Applicants wishing to work in the country in which they officially obtained their PhD are **NOT** eligible. If the PhD is officially shared between two institutions in different countries, both countries will be excluded. Visits of less than 6 months to the future supervisor or any other laboratory in the proposed destination country are permitted.

Applicants wishing to work in the country where they developed their PhD studies, even if the PhD is officially issued by a different country, or to work again with the candidate's PhD supervisor, no matter where the latter is located, are not eligible. Again, visits of less than 6 months to any other laboratory in the proposed destination country are permitted.

Applicants wishing to **return to a laboratory** where they have already worked for more than **six months** in one or several visits are not eligible, regardless of where that laboratory may be located. This includes the time spent during the master studies.

Other eligibility rules

Scientific scope

Research proposals must be within EMBO's scientific scope (EMBO subject areas are listed on page two). A more detailed description can be found at <http://www.embo.org/about-embo/subject-areas>.

Applications to the EMBO Fellowship Programme are expected to be **driven by a biological question**, explore the **mechanisms behind biological phenomena** and **yield biological insight**, rather than remaining at the descriptive or observational level. Mechanistic insight may involve molecules, but can also involve higher levels of organization, such as cells, tissues, organisms, populations or ecosystems. Applied or clinical work without a clear biological question is not eligible. Projects with an aim to develop an application, commercial product or process, or a device **may be** considered if a fundamental biology question behind the project is to be answered. For instance, development of technologies that enable biological discovery (microscopy, PCR, etc).

Applications in which the postdoctoral project is a direct continuation of the PhD project will not be considered.

Research integrity

EMBO expects responsible conduct of research from its awardees. All research activities supported by the EMBO Fellowship Programme must be in compliance with the respective national and institutional research integrity and ethics requirements, such as those set out in the [Belmont Report](#): Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research, and in the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). These refer to questions relevant to the use in research of human materials, including human embryonic stem cells, the use of animal models and, in general, any other potential ethical issues that may arise during the applicant's daily research activities. Applicants may be asked to provide evidence that their planned research conforms to the relevant regulations that apply at the host institution. In line with our commitment to the principles of research integrity, we require all EMBO Postdoctoral Fellows to complete an online course on research integrity.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools

EMBO acknowledges the value of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, as well as human feedback, in the preparation of funding applications. Applicants are fully and solely responsible for the originality and accuracy of their applications.

To provide transparency, applicants are requested to disclose whether AI tools were used in preparing their applications, and for what purpose (*e.g., chatGPT was used to improve language style*).

EMBO will continue following the developments in generative AI and adapt this policy as required.

Number of applications per selection round

Candidates may only submit one application, for one project, at one host laboratory at each round of selection. More than one applicant can apply to the same host laboratory provided they propose different projects.

Re-application

Re-application is permitted only once. **However, we will only consider a re-application in case of substantial changes to the proposal and/or the CV of the applicant or a change of host lab. The applicant should outline in the “Other Funding” section under “application changes” detailed and exact changes made to the proposal and/or the CV.**

IMPORTANT: All eligibility criteria must be met at time of re-submission.

Candidates can re-apply for the next round of selection while a decision is being made on their first application only if they are not eligible to apply after the decision is taken on the first submission.

Industrial research laboratories and applied projects

Applications to work in an industrial research laboratory with the intention to develop new commercial products or procedures will not be considered. Applications to work in an industrial or for-profit research laboratory to develop a basic research project in biology are eligible.

Projects with an aim to develop an application, commercial product or process, or a device may be considered if there is a fundamental biology question behind the project to be answered. For instance, development of technologies that enable biological discovery (microscopy, PCR, etc.) may be eligible for funding.

Application process

Applications for an EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship are accepted via the EMBO [online application system](#).

There are no application deadlines for EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowships, but there are two cutoff evaluation dates:

Fourth Friday of January, 2 PM Central European Time: Applications submitted up to this date will enter the Spring Selection Round. Results for this round will be announced at the end of June of the same year.

Second Friday of July, 2 PM Central European Summer Time: Applications submitted up to this date will enter the Autumn Selection Round. Results for this round will be announced at the end of December of the same year.

Although the online application system will be open throughout the year, the system may be closed for short periods after each selection deadline for technical and maintenance purposes and occasional downtimes may occur at any time. Candidates must take these potential issues into consideration during their application process.

Applicants need to register for an EMBO online application account. Once login details for the account have been received by e-mail it is possible to start an application.

Applications must be written in English and no special formatting is allowed. Similarly, figures and tables **cannot be included** in the application.

Applications and supporting documentation (two reference letters and the acceptance letter from the receiving institute) are only accepted via the EMBO [online application system](#). Please keep in mind that one of the reference letters **must** be from the PhD supervisor/PhD co-supervisor and none of the reference letters can come from referees in the receiving institute. We require that the reference letters and acceptance letter from the receiving institute use [institutional email addresses](#) and not private ones.

An application can only be completed and submitted when all the information required is provided and the two reference letters and the acceptance letter from the receiving institute are submitted via the the EMBO [online application system](#)

The date, according to Central European Time, on which the candidates successfully submit their application is the reference date for eligibility and evaluation. Changes in address or contact email that occur after submission of an application are the only changes permitted after the application is submitted without re-opening it. All other changes, including publication updates, will require the office to re-open the application which will change the submission date to the date when the application completed and submitted. Please note that this may cause the application to become ineligible. Once the application enters the evaluation process no further changes are allowed.

IMPORTANT: Registration for an EMBO online application account is not sufficient to enter the corresponding evaluation round. An application is only regarded as complete once all the required information is submitted and the candidate confirms completion. Applications completed after 14:00 CE(S)T on the day of the evaluation cutoff deadline will enter the next evaluation round. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.**

Selection process

The primary selection criteria applied by the EMBO Fellowship Committee are scientific excellence of the candidate, the project and the host laboratory.

Aspects considered are:

Scientific achievements of the applicant

- Scientific contributions and CV
- Performance of the applicant based on reference letters

Project proposal

- Quality, scope, novelty and biological significance of the proposed research
- Coherent and logical presentation of the research project

Host laboratory

- Suitability of the host laboratory for the proposed research project and training of the applicant
- Scientific achievements of the host laboratory

Applications to work with host laboratories with which the candidate has collaborated in the past generally receive lower priority for funding. Likewise, projects that are a continuation of an applicant's PhD research will not be considered.

Fellowships are awarded to candidates. However, the selection process also takes into consideration the specific research project proposed by the candidate and the suitability of the host laboratory. For this reason, substantial changes to the proposed project or moving to a different host laboratory will result in the termination of the fellowship. However, exceptions can be made under extraordinary circumstances. The EMBO Fellowship Office must be informed of any intention to change the research project or the host laboratory once a fellowship has been awarded. Requests for such changes are examined by the Head of the Fellowship Programme and the Chair of the Fellowship Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Evaluation timeline (times are approximate)

0-6 weeks after cutoff date. First stage of evaluation: pre-screening

All complete applications are screened by the EMBO office to ensure eligibility requirements are met. Ineligible applications will receive an email explaining why their application is ineligible. All eligible applicants receive an acknowledgement e-mail within maximum two weeks of the evaluation cutoff date. Applicants who do not receive any communication within two weeks after the cutoff deadline should contact the office for clarification.

Each eligible application is then assessed by members of the Fellowship Committee.

During the pre-screening, the committee reviews a condensed application form, which consists of:

- the summary of the applicant's main scientific achievements along with the list of publications;
- the summary and biological significance of the proposed work;
- justification for choice of the host lab;
- reference and acceptance letters.

All applicants are informed about the outcome of the pre-screening by email about six to eight weeks after the cutoff date. Normally, the top 20-25% ranked applications are selected for the second round of evaluation.

7-15 weeks after cutoff date. Second stage of evaluation: interview

For applicants who successfully pass the first evaluation step, an interviewer, who is an expert in the applicant's area of research, is selected from among the EMBO Members and EMBO Young Investigators. Interviews take place through online video calls only. Candidates must give a presentation as part of the interview procedure. The interview lasts ninety minutes: in the first thirty minutes the applicant should introduce their PhD achievements and describe the proposed postdoctoral project, while the following sixty minutes are dedicated to a Q&A session. The interview will take place at the interviewer's convenience.

15-17 weeks after cutoff date. Third stage of evaluation: selection

Applications selected to the 2nd stage are independently evaluated by members of the EMBO Fellowship Committee. At this stage, the Fellowship Committee evaluate the full application along with the report from the interviewer.

At the biannual Fellowship Committee meetings, committee members meet to take the final funding decisions. On the day of the committee meeting, online interviews are held with applicants ranked in 'grey zone'. Applicants in the grey zone are informed approximately two weeks in advance if they will be interviewed by the Fellowship Committee. Candidates will be asked to prepare a 7-minute presentation summarizing their current projects and future directions. The presentation will be followed by a 10-minute Q&A discussion with the Fellowship Committee panel.

All applicants are officially informed about the outcome by email within two weeks of the committee meeting.

Successful applicants in the Spring Selection Round must start their fellowship between July 1st of the award year and February 15th in the following year. Successful applicants in the Autumn Selection Round must start their fellowships between January 1st and August 15th of the following year. Due to practical limitations, fellowships can only start on either the 1st or the 15th of each month.

PLEASE NOTE: *No feedback will be provided to applicants at any stage of the application process. Due to the large number of applications the committee members evaluate, they cannot include any individualized comments in their assessments. For feedback to be helpful it must be correct and detailed. To do this for the >1,400 applications received per year, the EMBO office would need to employ several individuals trained to at least PhD level. Instead, the funds are used to support additional fellowships.*

Benefits

EMBO Fellows' Network

Every year, fellows awarded two-three years earlier are invited to the EMBO Fellows' Meeting in Heidelberg, Germany. These events bring together fellows in a friendly atmosphere to learn, share experiences, and establish new collaborations and contacts. It is also an opportunity to meet the EMBO staff and give feedback and suggestions on the programme.

Fellows have also access to the EMBO Fellows Online Network platform <https://fellowsnetwork.embo.org/> where they can register for courses, receive news from the office, get and post job offers, discuss about science and ask about practical and living conditions in the destination countries.

EMBO Laboratory Leadership Courses

EMBO offers its Postdoctoral Fellows the possibility to attend online the [EMBO Laboratory Leadership Courses free of charge](#). Fee waivers are granted to fellows within 3 years of being awarded and only if the fellowship has been held for at least 6 months.

In addition, fellows can take one of the 1-day Scientific Skills courses (online only) from the selection below:

- Communicating Research: Paper Writing & Short Presentations
- Applying Design Principles to Schematic Figures

The EMBO Laboratory Leadership and the Scientific Skill courses are hosted by the Fellowship office directly.

Sign up for courses are done exclusively via the EMBO Fellows Online Network platform.

EMBO Non-Stipendiary Fellowship

Postdoctoral Fellows who decide to terminate early their Fellowship should contact the Fellowship Office as soon as possible to obtain the correct information on how to properly terminate their Fellowship.

In case of early termination of the EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship due to funding from another source, postdoctoral fellows can become holders of a non-stipendiary fellowship. To apply to become an EMBO Non-Stipendiary Fellow, a postdoctoral fellow must have received at least one month of paid fellowship and must continue working on the same project and in the same lab as described in the application. Postdoctoral fellows who terminate their fellowship early due to change of research project or career trajectory are not eligible to become EMBO non-stipendiary Fellows.

EMBO Non-Stipendiary Fellows are entitled to attend the Fellows' Meetings and, if they have held the paid fellowship for at least 6 months, the Laboratory Leadership Course for postdocs free of charge.

Please note: It is not possible to directly apply for a non-stipendiary fellowship. Non-stipendiary fellowships are only offered to applicants who terminate early the award and held the EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship for at least one month.

Applicants who during the evaluation process are awarded with another grant, should get in contact with the Fellowship Office to clarify if they still intend to be part of the selection.

Fellowship Duration

Fellowships are awarded for a period of 24 months although shorter durations can be requested. The minimum fellowship duration that can be requested is 12 months.

Secondments

Fellows can spend up to 20% of the fellowship duration in another institute/country, while still being paid by their host institute. However, fellows are not allowed to work in the country where they have obtained their PhD.

Benefits for fellowships in EMBC member states

Contract

EMBO provides funds to the host institution with the sole intention to cover the cost of a full-time employment contract to be issued by the host institution to the awardee. These costs include employer's social contributions, awardee's social contributions, taxes and the net salary of the awardee. The EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship does not cover bench fees, overheads, funds for consumables or any other financial benefits to the host supervisor or the receiving institute. The [grant rate](#) depends on the country being visited. The transfer of funds and their use is regulated by a grant agreement that will be signed by both EMBO and the Host Institution. The contract between the host institution and the awardee will be issued according to the local and national regulations in each of the EMBC member states.

PLEASE NOTE: The grant rates listed above are not an indication of a gross salary. The net salary of a fellow will be lower. Please also note that if the host institution's internal, local or national regulations limit the maximum salary of the awardee to a level below the funds provided by EMBO, the host institution shall return the remaining funds to EMBO. **Applicants should inform themselves of the salary and employment conditions with their intended host institute.**

Travel and relocation allowance

The travel & relocation allowance is intended to support the travel and relocation costs of eligible fellows and their families. The principles, rules and eligibility criteria as well as current rates are available in the [travel and relocation policy](#).

Maternity and Parental leave

Part of the funds transferred to the Hosting Institute is used to cover the social contribution of the fellow, therefore the fellow has access to the welfare system of the hosting country to get parental benefits. Fellows whose children are born during their fellowship are entitled to request an extension of their fellowship at **no cost for EMBO** equal to the time they take as maternity and/or parental leave. The extension needs to be requested by the host supervisor to the EMBO Fellowship office before the end of the fellowship.

Long-term sick leave

Similarly to the parental leave, fellows who due to sicknesses are not allowed to work for an extended period of time and that during this time are paid by the social security system of the hosting country can require an extension of their fellowship at **no cost for EMBO**. The

extension needs to be requested by the host supervisor to the EMBO Fellowship office before the end of the fellowship.

Part-time work

It is possible to work part-time during the fellowship at no additional cost for EMBO. The request to work part time shall be discussed with the Host Supervisor and the Fellowship Office. **Please note:** the maximum fellowship duration (full-time plus part-time) must not exceed 36 months.

Benefits for fellowships in EMBC/EMBO global partners and non-member states

Fellows going outside EMBC member states receive a stipend (see below) for 24 months unless a shorter time is requested (minimum of 12 months). Fellows receiving a stipend also have access to child day-care allowance, relocation allowance, EMBO fellows' network activities and Laboratory Leadership courses, like fellows in EMBC member states (please see the section above). Please note that additional benefits listed below compensate for benefits that are normally regulated by employment contracts in EMBC member states.

Stipend instead of an employment contract

The stipend is solely intended to cover the cost of living in the host country. The EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowship does not cover bench fees, overheads, funds for consumables or any other financial benefits to the host supervisor or the receiving institute. The [stipend rate](#) depends on the country being visited and might be subject to taxation. *We cannot advise on national tax regulation, and we recommend fellows to contact the relevant authorities in the host country.*

Travel and relocation allowance

The travel & relocation allowance is intended to support the travel and relocation costs of eligible fellows and their families. The principles, rules and eligibility criteria as well as current rates are available in the [travel and relocation policy](#).

Child-daycare allowance

Fellows can claim child-daycare support for children under the age of six who accompany the fellow to the host country during the fellowship. The incurred child day-care costs up to a total of €2.500 per fellowship year and per child is permitted. The corresponding amount is prorated according to the fraction of the year in which child-daycare expenses were incurred. The child-daycare allowance can be claimed upon completion of the first year of the fellowship and presentation of the childbirth certificate; the resulting amount will be transferred directly to the fellow as a reimbursement.

Dependent child allowance

EMBO fellows are entitled to receive a country-specific additional allowance for dependent children under the age of 18. See the [stipend rate](#) sheet for further information

Parental leave

Fellows whose children are born during their fellowship are entitled to 3 months paid parental leave. Parental leave has to begin within 6 months of the birth of a child. Fellows who take parental leave during the fellowship are entitled to an extension of their fellowship for an equivalent period. This extension must be requested by the host supervisor at the end of the fellowship.

Fellows must inform the Fellowship Office of their intention to take parental leave.

Part-time work

It is possible to work part-time during the fellowship at no additional cost for EMBO. The request to work part time shall be discussed with the Host Supervisor and the Fellowship Office. **Please note:** the maximum fellowship duration (full-time plus part-time) must not exceed 36 months.

Annex – EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowships: links

More information regarding the application process can be found at the following links:

- [Eligibility](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- Contract rates
- [Travel and relocation policies](#)
- Link to the [submission page](#).

Please note that registration is not sufficient to enter the corresponding evaluation round, but it allows you to see what information is needed in preparing the application. **An application is only regarded as complete once all the required information is submitted and the candidate confirms completion.**

Before contacting the office in case of any questions, please check the above links first.