Guidelines and principles of ICREA Acadèmia evaluation
[July 2020 version]

The extraordinary success and impact of ICREA researchers in our system is directly related to the quality of the selection and evaluation procedures that you, as evaluator, are part of. This is a great responsibility, and ICREA is extremely grateful that you have accepted to assist us.

The selection of candidates for ICREA positions is based on peer evaluation and has scientific excellence and leadership as its sole criteria. There are five evaluation panels, covering all areas of knowledge, with some overlap to cater to interdisciplinary and emerging fields.

The basic concept for the evaluation is that it depends essentially on the judgement of high profile experts. We do not want to rely on quantitative measures of academic production, but rather on the highly informed judgement of the experts in recognizing excellence. We look for quality, not quantity.

In general, Universities and Research Centres find it difficult to welcome interdisciplinary and emerging fields. We encourage evaluators to equally treat all disciplines (both emerging and established) when making their decisions.

ICREA fully endorses and shares the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (SFDORA), by which it discourages evaluators to rely only on journal-based metrics (such as Journal Impact Factors) as a surrogate measure for the quality of individual research articles. For the purposes of research assessment, ICREA considers the value of all research outputs, including qualitative indicators of research impact such as influence on policy and practice.

Needless to say, ICREA is an equal opportunity organization and does not allow discriminatory references to gender, age, nationality, racial group, nor any other possible discriminatory issues.

A word on ICREA positions
At present, ICREA has two very different calls.

The ICREA Senior call offers permanent positions in the Catalan Research system. The selected researchers get a permanent position, ICREA Research Professorship (equivalent to tenure) and become ICREA employees. ICREA researchers go through an evaluation process (the promotion) at regular intervals throughout their entire career. This is our most important and best-known call.

The ICREA Acadèmia call offers an award to university professors who already hold permanent positions in the Catalan research system. The award is for five years and is meant to promote the research of the awardees mainly through relieving them from teaching duties.

Areas and Panels
For organizational purposes, ICREA considers five areas of knowledge, with a different evaluation panel for each of them:
1. Social and Behavioural Sciences.
2. Humanities
3. Experimental Sciences and Mathematics
4. Engineering Sciences
5. Life and Medical Sciences

**Interdisciplinary**
Interdisciplinary proposals may be evaluated by more than one panel. There will always be, however, a main panel that makes the decision, and a counselling panel that contributes its opinion for consideration.

**Selection procedure**
ICREA evaluations have always two steps. The first one is online and individual, and the second one is a face-to-face meeting of the committee members where discussions come together to form a consensus.

An ICREA committee is appointed for each of the five areas and is composed by a number of members (from six to eight) covering the different subdisciplines. The committees assess the candidates twice: first online and later in a meeting in Barcelona.

As an evaluator, you will start with an online individual assessment followed by a face-to-face meeting with the full committees, where the final decisions are made.

If the number of candidates is too large, the online evaluation phase may be broken into two, so that half of the committee reviews about half of the candidates. The resulting grades are then used by ICREA to produce a shorter list that is then shared (without the grades) with the other half of the committee.

In the first online phase, you are expected to write a short report on each candidate (that will be disclosed to the other members of the panel) and provide an indicative numerical grade (which does not get disclosed). This grade is used only to generate shortlists (for instance, to split a list of applicants that is too long), and is not used after that phase of the evaluation.

Please be aware that all applicants are open to selection, regardless of shortlists and numerical grades. The entire list stays open throughout the selection process.

The final output that is expected from each committee is a ranked list of the best applicants. All the remarks and comments generated in the selection process are confidential, and will not be disclosed, except the feedback report prepared at the end of the evaluation by the panel member appointed as feedback editor.

**Individual assessment**
Special care is taken to ensure that online assessments truly reflect individual opinions of each member of a committee. Hence, the identity of the other members is not disclosed in the online phase. This is intended to increase the quality and independence of the comments made by the evaluators.

**Appointment of experts**
Committees are made *ad hoc* by invitation each year. ICREA maintains a database of scholars and scientists with a high rate of turnover. Members can serve in a given committee for a maximum of 4 editions.
Candidates are not informed of the identity of the reviewers. In the ICREA webpage there is a list of past evaluators and committee members without indication of area or year. Your opinions are never disclosed, except when explicitly authorized.

**Ability to evaluate**
If you find yourself in a position of conflict of interest regarding a particular applicant, or you are unable to evaluate an application for personal or professional reasons, please notify ICREA staff as soon as practicable, and a solution will be offered.

**Decision making**
The strength of ICREA selection depends on the quality of the decisions made by the committees. At ICREA we deliberately avoid using calculations or algorithms to rank candidates. Rankings are made exclusively by consensus within the panel, and not through voting or polling.

The ranked lists produced by the committees are always fully respected. The capacity of ICREA direction is limited to decide how many candidates of each area can be selected each year. For this purpose, ICREA Director may request counselling from the panel, and will compare the current list to those from previous calls (the existing ICREAs and ICREA Acadèmia awardees).

**Eligibility**
The main eligibility criterion remains scientific and academic excellence, combined with leadership (capacity to lead a research group).

These two main criteria can be further broken down to include concepts such as: impact and relevance of publications (books, essays, journals, monographies and other contributions); citations; position in the authorship of publications and relevance of personal contribution; influence and footprint of candidates’ contributions; number and amount of national and international research projects obtained; relevance of personal contribution in these projects, leadership ability; number of supervised PhD theses, professional progression of mentorees, role in international societies of the field, invitations to speak at congresses and plenary conferences of major international events, participation and role in international research networks, participation in editorial committees, structure and quality of the research plan presented; balance between incremental research and the ability to present innovative ideas, viability of the planned funding sources, importance of the research proposed in the broader context of the specialty, quality and rigor of the chosen methodology, contribution to the development of new methodologies, impact of research, importance and influence of books, clinical guidelines, protocols and sectorial analyses, services to the scientific and academic community, importance of the national and international research awards obtained, as well as other academic or research milestones achieved.

The above list is not necessarily complete, due to the wide range and scope of scientific and academic disciplines covered by the ICREA Acadèmia grant, although it covers most of the elements commonly used in assessments.

**Administrative requirements**
All candidates are checked for eligibility before inclusion in the lists. As a member, you can safely assume that all administrative, academic, legal and labour issues of candidates have been cleared previously. However, if doubts arise, please notify ICREA staff and we will look into it.
**Mobility and international experience**
Committee members should consider mobility as a valuable experience. This may seem obvious, but sadly, in some instances other institutions still think and act otherwise. Thus for ICREA it is always necessary that candidates have had a substantial international exposure.

**Age**
Applicants of all ages are welcome. There are often questions as to whether there should be an age limitation in ICREA calls. In fact there is none, outside current legal and labour regulations.

**Quotas**
Although there are five areas of knowledge and it is very unlikely that one of them does not receive high quality applications, there are no pre-assigned quotas to the number of researchers to be selected in each area. In fact, ICREA operates with no quotas whatsoever.

**Gender balance**
We at ICREA take gender inequalities very seriously. The fact remains, however, that ICREA receives many more male than female applications (roughly a 75/25 proportion). At present the proportion of ICREA researchers is about 80/20. Despite the fact that this is a general issue across all areas of science -and society at large- we keep wondering how this situation can be changed, and whether there are things that we should do to improve the matter.

Although the question seems unanswerable at the moment, we keep promoting public debates and scientific discussions to try to come up with solutions to this particularly resilient problem.

We remain vigilant on this issue, and encourage panelists to share their ideas with us to try and implement a system that we can be proud of.

**Further questions**
ICREA staff is here to provide you with prompt and accurate advice in all matters concerning the evaluation process. Please do not hesitate to ask if you need clarification.