



**СЕЛКОСТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ
AGRICULTURAL ACADEMY**

гр. София 1373, ул. Суходолска № 30, тел.: +359 2 812 75 05; факс: +359 2 812 75 15;
Sofia 1373, 30 Suhodolska Str.; tel.: +359 2 812 75 05; fax: +359 2 812 75 15;
e-mail: ssa@agriacad.bg; <http://agriacad.bg/>

AFFIRMED BY: /signature/

PROF. DSc ENG. MARTIN BANOV,

CHAIRMAN OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACADEMY

**GUIDELINES FOR THE PARTICIPATION AND METHODOLOGY
FOR EVALUATION OF PROJECTS UNDER THE "POST-DOCTORS"
MODULE OF THE "YOUNG SCIENTISTS AND POST-DOCTORS - 2"
NATIONAL PROGRAM IN THE AGRICULTURAL ACADEMY**

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1. Objectives of the Program

A specific objective of the “Young scientists and post-doctors – 2” National Program is attraction, retention and development of highly qualified young scientists (YS) and post-doctors (PD), thus achieving sustainable reproduction of the scientific capacity at national level, to ensure reintegration and realization of young and promising scientific personnel, as well as a favourable environment for the exchange of scientific ideas. The ultimate goal is to create a new generation of highly qualified scientists conducting quality research, accountable to society and with results that support the implementation of the National Strategy for Development of Scientific Research.

2. Scientific areas

The areas of the competition (<https://www.agriacad.bg/en/phd-students/accredited-doctoral-programs>) are the same as described in the Council of Ministers’ Decree № 125 of 24 June 2002 fields of higher education and professional directions:

1. Social, economic and legal sciences, scientific specialty “Economics and management (agriculture)”.

2. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, scientific specialty “Genetics”.

3. Technical sciences, scientific specialties: Hydroamelioration construction; Mechanization and electrification of the animal husbandry; Mechanization and electrification of the plant husbandry; Technology of biologically active substances (including enzymes, hormones, proteins)’ Technology of meat and fish products; Technology of alcoholic and soft drinks; Technology of processing and storage of grain, grain products and mixtures; Technology of canned fruits and vegetables.

4. Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, scientific specialties: Selection and seed production of cultivated plants; General agriculture; Soil science; Agrochemistry; Amelioration (incl. soil erosion and its control); Plant protection (including phytopathology, virology, herbology, etc.); Fruit growing; Plant husbandry; Ornamental plants; Nutrition of farm animals and fodder technology; Pig farming; Cattle and buffalo breeding; Sheep and goat breeding; Farm animal breeding, biology and biotechnology of reproduction.

3. Duration of the program

The programme will run until the end of 2025 in two stages:

Stage I, from 1 November 2022 to 1 December 2023.

Stage II, from 1 March 2024 to 1 October 2025.

A separate competition shall be launched for each stage.

4. Eligibility conditions for applicants to the Post-Doctors Module

Candidates for this module may be scientists with an acquired educational and scientific doctoral degree in the country or abroad. They must meet the minimum national requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific fields in which they are applying.

At the time of their participation in the Programme (stage), applicants must meet the definition of a post-doctoral fellow: a scientist who has obtained a first educational and scientific doctoral degree, **but not more than five years after its acquisition.**

Ranking advantage will be given to PDs that are external to the beneficiary organisation – Agricultural academy (AA) if the total scores of two or more candidates are equal. It is permissible to appoint PDs on an additional part-time contract in the same beneficiary organisation where they work.

For this module a project proposal must be submitted by applicants along with other documents, mentioned below (sec. 9). The proposal must deal with a current issue and to correspond to high scientific standards. There must be a detailed work programme and a detailed financial plan accompanied by a justification. The proposal shall be submitted in Bulgarian or English if the applicant is a foreign citizen.

The project proposal shall be formatted according to the attached template: AA-postdoc-2022-... the applicant's first and last name (may also be in Bulgarian) should be placed instead of ellipsis.

Project proposal deadline: up to 10 months, with the possibility of extension for internal applicants only, but not more than a total of 12 months during the period of Programme implementation.

Project team: the PD is the only member of the project team.

5. Obligations of the organisation in which the project will be carried out

The scientific organisation that hosts the PD provides facilities for the project implementation, as well as personnel if specialised studies (with toxic, ionising and other types of effects) are planned. It must take timely action to remove any obstacles to the project implementation. The PD has the right to lodge a complaint with the Chairmen of the Academy if no action is taken by the organization despite his or her indications of constraints.

6. Eligibility conditions for expenditure in the Post-Doctors Module

6.1. Eligible costs to support PDs

➤ **Up to 85 % for monthly remuneration** - the funds under the module can be used both for basic monthly remuneration of **newly recruited PDs** and for additional monthly remuneration of **PDs already recruited in the beneficiary organisation**, as follows:

- For post-doctoral fellows newly recruited in the structural unit of the beneficiary organisation - not less than BGN 2 000 and not more than BGN 3 000 (including funds for insurance at the expense of the employer and for additional remuneration for the educational and scientific doctoral degree);

- For additional monthly remuneration of PDs, employed in the structural unit of the beneficiary organisation - not lower than BGN 400 and not higher than BGN 800 (including funds for employer's contributions).

➤ **Up to 15 % of the project funds can be used for mobility:** for business trips (travel, day and accommodation), field work, and payment of fees for legal participation in scientific forums.

➤ **Up to 25 % of the project funds can be used for materials and consumables** necessary to carry out scientific research in the hosting organization.

In the case of a **secondment of a PD** from another country or place than that of the hosting organisation, up to BGN 1000 per month will be granted for accommodation costs.

A transfer of funds between the Mobility and Materials and Supplies cost items is permissible but the total amount must not exceed 40 % of the project amount. The justification of a need of transferring funds shall be submitted in due time (when the need is identified) to the Head of the structural unit in which the post-doctoral fellow works.

The maximum amount for each individual project of an internal PD is BGN 6,500.

The maximum amount for each individual project of an external/newly appointed PD is BGN 23,530.

Eligible expenses for the hosting organisation:

- **Up to 5 % indirect costs** - for overheads, administrative and technical support of the project by the beneficiary organisation.

- **Up to 4 % for evaluation** of project proposals and reports.

6.2. Ineligible expenses

The following types of costs are considered inadmissible under the current procedure for the selection of project proposals:

- expenditure on activities carried out before the date of entry into force of the financing agreement under this procedure;
- expenditure already funded or subject to confirmed and assured funding from other sources;
- expenditure on the purchase of assets and the carrying out of activities not directly linked to the project proposal and the fundamental research envisaged therein;
- costs of fines, penalties and forfeitures incurred during the performance of the contract;
- consultancy costs for the preparation of the project proposal.

7. Indicators for proposal evaluation and evaluation procedure

The indicators that will be used to evaluate the project proposals are:

1. Relevance and significance of the scientific issue in regional, national or global aspect.
2. Originality and innovativeness of the research, and realism of the project (of the work program and financial plan).
3. Research experience and competence of the candidate (including publications on the topic).
4. Expected results and contributions from the implementation of the project:
 - Outcomes linked to new knowledge;
 - Contribution to solving problems related to societal challenges (if applicable);
 - Number of publications in peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science, reflecting the results of the project;
 - Number of applications for certificates/patents/utility models resulting from the implementation of the project.

The administrative compliance of the applicants' documents is carried out in relation to:

- the date of submission of the documents;
- the requested funding;
- the applicant's eligibility requirements;
- the duration of the project and the working program coincidence;
- the breakdown of eligible costs by item.

In case of non-compliance of any of the indicators with the requirements of the Program and these Rules, the candidate will be removed from the competition.

The evaluation of proposals will be based on a scorecard (Table 1) and a rating scale (Table 2) by two reviewers appointed by order of the Director of the hosting organization. The referees are habilitated persons registered with the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID) in the relevant scientific field and professional direction.

Table 1. The scorecard for project evaluation

Scientific criteria for evaluation of project proposals	Maximum score
1. Relevance and significance of the scientific issues	20
1.1. Significance of scientific objectives. Relevance of hypotheses	15
Motivation:	
2. Originality and innovation of the scientific research and realism of the proposed methodology	25
Rationale:	
3. Research experience and competence of the candidate (including publications on the topic)	5
Motivation:	
4. Expected results and contributions of the project implementation	50
• Outcomes linked to new knowledge	10
• Contribution to solving problems related to societal challenges (if applicable)	10
• Number of publications in peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science, prepared by the candidate (5 pts. per publication, but not more than 15 pts.)	15
• Number of requests for certificates/patents/utility models with the participation of the applicant (5 pts. per request, but no more than 15 pts.)	15
Motivation:	
Recommendations to the applicant (optional)	

The final score is based on the scale in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation scale for PD project proposals

Evaluation	Points
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"excellent"	85 to 100
"very good"	69 to 84
"good"	53 to 68
"untenable"	< 52

Only projects rated "excellent" will be funded, and if financial resources become available, the next projects in the ranking list will be funded, with the exception of projects rated "untenable".

8. Project reporting

The PDs are required to maintain proper accounting records and documentation of project expenditures incurred in accordance with the contract. The funds provided shall be spent in a targeted and legal manner for the implementation of the project activities detailed in the Work Programme. The Contractor (project leader) may not modify or cancel activities under the Work Programme, except in extraordinary cases (prolonged incapacity for work, emergencies, disasters, etc.). The Contractor may not divert funds from the approved Financial Plan to implement other activities or tasks outside the Work Programme.

The Project Leader is obliged to submit to the Head of the Organisation a Report on the scientific and financial implementation of the project within 20 days from the date of completion of the project. The report shall be evaluated by the selected reviewers according to the approved criteria (Table 3) within 20 days of submission of the report.

Table 3. Criteria for project performance evaluation

Evaluation	Criteria
"excellent"	Full implementation of work programme tasks
"very good"	Over 85% completion of work programme tasks
"good"	Over 70% completion of work programme tasks
"unacceptable"	Less than 70% completion of work programme tasks

Projects rated "excellent" may apply for a project extension if the project leaders are PDs internal to the organization.

Penalties for reports rated "unacceptable" are determined by each organisation where the project was implemented.

The evaluations of the reviewers shall be sent to the director of the hosting organization and to the Program Management Committee in the AA (represented by prof. PhD Elena Todorovska) via email: ssa_nauka@agriacad.bg.

9. Deadline for submission of proposals

All documents must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the day announced on the AA website in pdf format via email: ssa_nauka@agriacad.bg:

1. Application for participation in the program (free text) addressed to Chairmen of the AA.
2. Scanned copy of the "Doctor" diploma.
2. Evidence that the candidate is engaged in scientific research: curriculum vitae with attachments (list of publications, list of projects with the candidate's participation, list of participation in scientific events, all described in detail by year for the entire scientific career), employment contracts, diplomas for qualification and training.
3. Project proposal (template).

The ranking of the participants is announced on the websites of AA and the hosting organization within two months of the competition announcement.