

Regulations for the Allocation of Operational Funding from the Institute's Base Funding

This document governs the allocation of exceptional funding from the institute's base funding for the research activities of the employees of the Institute of Ecology and Earth Sciences (IEES). The purpose of allocating the funding is to ensure the sustainability of key focus areas that are important for the institute. In accordance with the decision of the Council of the University of Tartu No. 9 (29.06.2020), base funding is used, among other things, to fund the career paths of university employees and to ensure the job security of academic staff.

The regulation for funding from base funding governs grants exceeding 20,000 euros, the allocation of which is decided by the institute's council.

The funding covers the following measures:

1. Support for the continuation of the work of research groups when their further involvement at the university is at risk, hereinafter referred to as bridge funding.
2. Short-term support for junior researchers who have completed their Ph.D., during the period of applying for a postdoctoral position or an independent research grant.
3. Strengthening of research groups.

General principles for granting funding:

Funding is allocated through a competitive process, and only the conditions for providing extraordinary need-based support are regulated. The opening of competitions and the amount allocated to each measure depends on the availability of the institute's base funds, and relevant decisions are made by the institute's director at the end of the financial year or at the beginning of autumn. The deadlines for submitting funding applications are determined by the institute's director. Applications are submitted to the council of the Institute of Ecology and Earth Sciences by the head of a department or the institute's director. The institute's council reserves the right to modify the procedures on a case-by-case basis. The decision to grant funding can be revoked by the institute's council due to significant changes in circumstances, such as if a research group secures sufficient funding from other sources.

1. Bridge Funding for Research Groups

- Bridge funding is an exceptional support measure to enable the continued long-term work of IEES research groups when the unsuccessful application for a basic or applied research grant puts the group's continued involvement at the university at risk.
- The maximum duration of bridge funding is one year.
- Bridge funding covers the salary of the employee(s) based on the minimum salary of the respective salary level at the University of Tartu and research costs for up to 20% of the salary fund.

Principles for Allocating Bridge Funding:

- Bridge funding can be applied outside the competition for up to 1.5 full-time positions for groups whose ETAG grant application, or an equivalent grant application was the first to be left unfunded in the field-specific ranking.

- Through a competitive process, all research groups meeting the bridge funding conditions, as well as those who were the first to be left unfunded, may apply for support if more than 1.5 full-time positions are required.

The application must include the following content:

- For whose salary coverage the funding is requested;
- A description of the research planned for the period covered by the funding;
- Activities planned to increase the group's success in applying for research funding;
- A justification of the budget.

The length of the application should be up to 5,000 characters.

The department head will provide a separate text (up to 2,000 characters) outlining the importance of the research group for the department/institute/society (including teaching and supervision activities). If the department head is applying for the support, this part of the application will be prepared by the institute's director.

2. Funding for Junior Researchers who Have Completed their PhD

- This funding is intended as an exceptional support measure for junior researchers (up to three years after defending their PhD) during the period of seeking a postdoctoral position (or equivalent funding). The aim of the funding is to promote the career of promising junior researchers, contributing to the preservation and development of a research or teaching direction important to the institute, with the expectation of the researcher's future contribution to the institute's development.
- Generally, the applicant is expected to have already demonstrated documented activity (e.g., submitted applications) in seeking a postdoctoral position or applying for a research grant.
- The maximum period for using the funding is 1 year.
- The amount of funding is determined based on the salary scale of the (junior) researcher, and may additionally include research costs up to 20% of the salary fund.
- The application must include a (short) explanation:
 - For whom the funding is being requested;
 - The activity plan for the period covered by the funding;
 - A justification of the budget.
- The length of the application should be up to 5,000 characters.
- The institute may impose a quota on the number of junior researcher funding applications per department in each application round.

3. Funding for Strengthening Research Groups

The funding for strengthening research groups is intended to help research groups take advantage of unexpected research opportunities that offer a clear quality leap. This funding is not intended for allocating additional funds for the research group's planned activities. The funding for strengthening research groups is granted as a one-time grant.

Principles for Evaluating Applications for Funding from the Institute's Base Funding

Applications are evaluated by a working group (up to five members) formed by the council of the

institute, which includes representatives from each department and the head of the institute as a voting member. Representatives are appointed by the head of the institute based on proposals the heads of department. The working group composition is approved for one year. Members of the working group create a justified ranking of the applications (excluding for applications from their own department). In case of a tie, the institute director's vote is decisive. The final decision on who receives support and the amount awarded is made by the institute's council, based on the director's proposal, while respecting the ranking.

Guidelines for Ranking Applications for Working Group Members

Aspects to be evaluated:

- The research potential of the applicants and their ability to secure future funding (note that, for example, ETAG primarily evaluates the research project, whereas in the case of bridge funding, the research group is evaluated).
- The significance of the research direction for the institute, considering also the teaching contributions of the research group members.
- The justification of the activity plan.
- The relevance of the budget.
- The presence of PhD students requiring continued supervision.
- The funder's feedback (if available) from the latest application round.