

CIIMAR Guidelines for constitution, evaluation and discontinuation of research teams

Proposal for discussion by the Scientific Council of CIIMAR

These guidelines for constitution and evaluation of Research Teams were approved by the Board of Directors (BD) of CIIMAR, on the 10 October 2022, and will be sent to the Scientific Council for discussion and approval. The report of the External Advisory Committee (EAC) on the site visit that took place on 8 July 2022, makes recommendations and calls for clarification of important aspects, including the process of constitution, evaluation and discontinuation of team. The current projects aims to address all these aspects.

A. Research Teams and Team Leaders

1. The building blocks of the scientific organization of CIIMAR are the Research Teams.
2. The activity of a research Team is carried out under the guidance of its Team Leader, who bears full responsibility for its scientific activities and internal organization.
3. The CIIMAR designation “Teams Leader” is equivalent to the internationally used “Principal Investigator”, in indicating researchers with scientific autonomy, the ability to secure funds for his/her research, leading a team of investigators and supervising post-graduate students.
4. Team Leaders must have an internationally competitive CV.
5. Team Leaders are responsible for securing sufficient external funding, to allow the financial independence of the Team during its entire lifespan.
6. In the context of FCT research units a CIIMAR Team Leader cannot be affiliated to another research unit in Portugal and his/her affiliation to CIIMAR should be at least 30% of FTE.
7. Ideally, in order to allow continuity of objectives of a team, the employment of its team leader should be secured for the whole duration of the team. However, this principle cannot be applied as a pre-requisite for team constitution, because the duration of contracts in Portugal is quite variable. However, in order to ensure an acceptable degree of team stability, employment of new team leaders should be guaranteed for a minimum of four years.
8. The Human Dimension (HD) of a Research Teams should be based on the following principles:
a) Adequate supervision of all students and research trainees; b) one team may share one laboratory with other teams; c) occupancy should comply with safety regulations.
9. There is no minimum dimension for a research Team, provided the conditions of scientific excellence, leadership and self-sustainability are met.

10. The performance of research teams is evaluated every four years by external experts appointed by the EAC, as indicated in Section E.

11. The procedure for constitution and evaluation of new research teams is indicated in section D.

12. The space allocated to a Research Team is based on criteria that are set in a separate document.

B. Project Leaders

Members of a Research Team, holding a PhD, may submit an application for external research funding. This will be communicated to the Science and Innovation Office in order to analyze and approve the requested budget. Funding of the salary of the applicant must be secured for the whole duration of the funding period of the application, for instance by inclusion of the salary in the project budget. The CIIMAR designation for successful applicants is Project Leader.

C. Role of the EAC in the evaluation of Research Groups

1. The major mission of the EAC is to advise the Director and the BD of CIIMAR on strategic issues.

2. The EAC will also supervise the process of evaluation of Research Teams. For this purpose, the EAC will select external experts according to the nature of the teams to be evaluated. Based on the reports provided by these experts the EAC will submit recommendations (e.g. approval, dissolution, reformulation of teams) to the CIIMAR Director.

D. Procedures for constitution of a new Research Team

1. The process of constituting a new Research Team starts with the submission of an application to the CIIMAR Director, containing:

- a. Team designation.
- b. Full curriculum vitae of the proposed Team Leader.
- c. Abstract
- d. Scientific objectives and research plan for the next 4 years.
- e. Financial resources (running and approved projects, with indication of funding institution, budget and time frame).
- f. Team members (names and short CVs of PhD members; names of PhD students and thesis projects).
- g. Existing and planned collaborations.
- h. Proposal of activities in training, outreach and services to the community, if appropriate.

- i. Rationale for the integration in a specific CIIMAR Research Program.
- j. Expected support from CIIMAR.
- k. Suggestion of possible reviewers and conflict of interests.

2. Assessment of the proposal will include the following sequential steps:

- a. The Director's Office verifies if the application comprises of all required elements.
- b. The CIIMAR Director submits the application to the SC.
- c. The SC assesses the application, taking into account whether or not it is in line with CIIMAR objectives and holds sufficient promise.
- d. After a seminar given by the applicant Team Leader, the SC emits a recommendation on the appropriateness of the application, and whether it should be included in one of the 3 Research Programs of the CIIMAR. This recommendation is then submitted to the CIIMAR Board of Directors.
- e. Based on the recommendation by the SC and their own assessment, the CIIMAR Board of Directors reassesses the application and decides whether it merits to be submitted to assessment by the EAC.
- f. The EAC advises the CIIMAR Director on the acceptance or refusal of the new Research Team and its integration in a specific Research Program. This advice is based on reports provided by independent experts selected by the EAC.
- g. The evaluation process is managed by the Director's office, which sends the letters of invitation (signed by the Director), receives the evaluation reports and sends them to the EAC member assigned to the proposal, who prepares a pre-advice based upon the reviews and his/her personal appreciation. The Chairman of the EAC sends the EAC recommendation to the CIIMAR Director.
- h. Based on the recommendation the Director proposes and the Board of Directors (BD) decides on whether the Research Team will be created and, if so, how it will be integrated in a specific Research Program.
- i. The BD decision will be communicated to the applicant in writing and, if positive, will specify the space allocated to the Research Team and other conditions (e.g., for a new incoming Team Leader installation funds, special conditions to access to scientific platforms and duration of the installation phase).

3. Calendar for submission of proposals

The Director and the BD may establish a calendar for submission of proposals in consultation with the Chairman of the EAC.

E. Procedures for the evaluation of a Research Team

1. For each proposal the evaluation process is conducted by at least two external experts selected by the EAC. According to the nature of the group.
2. The calendar for the evaluation of Research Groups is established by the BD in consultation with the EAC Chairman/woman.
3. A Research Team will be evaluated under the responsibility of the EAC, between the third and the fourth year after its installation at the CIIMAR, and then every four years.
4. In case of need, a Research Team may be subjected to an ad hoc evaluation.
5. Research Team evaluation will be carried out taking into account:
 - a. Scientific relevance to the objectives and mission of CIIMAR
 - b. Scientific productivity
 - c. Fund raising capacity (national and international competitive funds)
 - d. Training activity (post-Doc, PhD, master students, participation in graduate programs, advanced training)
 - e. Knowledge transfer
 - f. Dissemination of science
6. Based on the reports by external experts the EAC makes a recommendation on the on changes that may be required. The recommendation is submitted to the CIIMAR Director, who submits this for pre-advice to the SC. The Director submits a proposal to the BD, who decides on the changes to be taken and the time frame for them to be implemented.
7. The decision to discontinue a Team should be taken after failure to accomplish the changes that were decided by the BD in the set time frame (point 6 above). A one-year notice should be given for discontinuation or, if shorter, agreed with the Team Leader. In this case, the Team concerned will provide, within 3 months, a resolution plan with a time line. This will be assessed and decided upon by the BD