

**This Guide describes the principles and procedures that will be used in the Interview stage (2<sup>nd</sup> stage recruitment) to evaluate and select the candidates for CarrerasPathfinders doctoral program (Grant Agreement 101126688). Candidates should familiarize themselves with the Interview process and how to prepare for it.**

## 1. The Program

CarrerasPathfinders program is a new world-wide unique doctoral program, co-funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) program of the European Commission under Horizon Europe (HEU), designed and coordinated by the Josep Carreras Leukaemia Research Institute (IJC). The aim of the program is to fund 14 excellent doctoral researchers for a period of 4 years. The program aims to shape a new generation of researchers capable of addressing unmet needs and societal challenges in blood cancers.

The scope of the program covers the entire spectrum of research and innovation in blood cancers from understanding disease biology to the implementation of novel processes in the clinical practice. A total of 14 different research projects under the supervision of IJC research group and scientific platform leaders were available. Projects have been pre-selected by the program Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) based on excellence, impact, and their triple-I dimension in internationality, inter-sectorality, and interdisciplinarity and the experience of the proposing supervisors.

## 2. Candidates

CarrerasPathfinders is open to researchers of any age, nationality, and gender without restrictions. Candidates must meet the following requirements that have already been technically checked by the Program Management Office.

- Candidates must comply with the Marie Skłodowska Curie (MSCA) mobility rule: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity in Spain for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the call deadline.
- Candidates must not have a doctoral degree at the call deadline.
- Applicants must meet the academic criteria for admission to the doctoral programs offered by the university of their choice from among the two partner universities affiliated with the program. Candidates must have proficiency in written and spoken English, assessed through the motivation letter and the interview.
- Of the 14 pre-selected doctoral projects, candidates can apply for a maximum of 3 different projects. In case of applying to more than one project, a letter of motivation specific to each project must be submitted. The complete list of projects can be consulted in the Annex I of this Guide.

### 3. Call Timeline and Selection Process

The selection process of the CarrerasPathfinders program is designed to ensure the integrity, fairness, and transparency of the process. The call for applicants opened on January 2, 2024, and remained open until March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

| Timeline 2024 (tentative) | Stage 1                          | Stage 2                             | Stage 3                               | Stage 4  | Stage 5                             |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Months                    | March                            | March-May                           | June                                  | June-July  | September                           |
| <b>Actions</b>            | Administrative Eligibility Check | External Evaluation MADRI+D experts | Interview Stage (external evaluators) | Notification of selected candidates and reserves | Onboarding and start of fellowships |

**Table 1. Selection Process**

The Recruitment process is based both on the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers<sup>1</sup> and a European Charter for Researchers<sup>2</sup> adopted by the European Commission in 2005 jointly. Before the interviews, all the experts will receive a copy of both together with the rest of the supporting documents. The European Commission awarded the IJC with the HR Excellence (HSR4R) seal in 2019<sup>3</sup>, and the Institute continues to maintain its policies in line with the Charter and Code principles. IJC ensures that the recruitment is open, efficient, transparent, and internationally comparable, as well as the Selection panels are composed of experts with diverse expertise and competences, maintaining the adequate gender balance, internationality, and diverse sector representation (industry and academy). The Applicants have been informed about the selection and recruitment process in advance and they will be provided with evaluation reports upon completion of all selection stages. The judging merit is based on their overall potential as researchers, their level of independence and creativity.

#### Evaluation criteria for Interviewing applicants

We aim to choose candidates of exceptional quality and outstanding competence. Only candidates who achieve a minimum score of 25 out of 40 points in the External evaluation stage will be considered for the Interview stage evaluation. At least the top three highest-scoring candidates per

<sup>1</sup> Code of Conduct for Recruitment. EURAXESS. (2005). <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/code>

<sup>2</sup> The European Charter for Researchers. EURAXESS. (2005). <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/european-charter>

<sup>3</sup> IJC HR Excellence, [https://www.carrerasresearch.org/es/hr-excellence\\_94734](https://www.carrerasresearch.org/es/hr-excellence_94734).

PhD project will be invited for an interview. The future DCs will be interviewed online by specifically tailored interview committee for each research project, featuring at least 2 external experts and the IJC supervisor (without voting rights). A representative of the Human Resources Talent Unit will monitor the interviews (also without voting rights). The CarrerasPathfinders Project Manager and another Project Manager from the International Grants Unit will assist in generating a comprehensive interview report. If necessary, a Project Manager from a Doctoral Network or an ITN. Candidates will be assessed on a scale of 1-60, 45 being the threshold for further consideration.

| Stage 3 Interview   |  |     |               |
|---|--|-----|---------------|
| Domain background   | Knowledge of the disciplines involved in the chosen PhD projects.  | 15  | 45 out of 60  |
| Communication   | Clarity of presentation. Ability to articulate ideas during the interview. Capacity to engage in discussions on diverse topics. Creative thinking. | 15  |               |
| Motivation  | Potential and willingness to work in the CarrerasPathfinders context.  | 15  |               |
| Career prospects  | Suitability of candidate's profile for the chosen research project.  | 15  |               |
| Total stage 3 score   |  | 60  |               |
| Scoring guide: 0- Unsatisfactory. The application fails in these criteria; 5- Poor. There are serious inherent weaknesses in relation to the criterion in question; 10 - Good. addresses the criterion well, although improvements are necessary; 15 - Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. |  |     |               |
| Total Stage 2 + Stage 3 (max.)  |  | 100 | 80 out of 100 |

**Table 2. Interview criteria**

## CarrerasPathfinders Interview Process

**Dates: June 26-28**

- o Each Interview will last approx. 35 minutes and will have the following structure:

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| 10 minutes | Candidate's presentation  |
| 10 minutes | Questions from the Panel and RRHH on specific knowledge about the background of the chosen project  |
| 10 minutes | Questions from the Panel and RRHH on general questions to assess their potential and willingness to work in IJC, motivation, career prospects |
| 5 minutes  | Discussion of Project supervisor (Principal Investigator) and Panel (without Candidate)   |

**Table 2. Interview process**

- The Interview panel will conduct the individual interviews with the candidates using an online platform, specifically MS Teams, to ensure compliance with data protection regulations. The Interview panels have the autonomy to establish their own dynamics and tone, depth and scope of the questions for each candidate. They will ask the questions that they deem relevant in order to properly assess the competencies of the DCs, either in general or in specific terms, the suitability to the project chosen and the match with the supervisor.
- The interview with the candidate will last approx. 30 minutes. After the candidate's presentation and questions from the Panel, the candidate will leave the Interview room and the Panel will proceed to the discussion with the chosen IJC supervisor. The Panel will end the interviews in a consensus meeting with the future Supervisor.
- The interviewers will evaluate and score candidates according to criteria provided above and provide their consensus to the representative of the PMO, who will fill in the interview template.
- The Interview evaluation summary report<sup>4</sup> including feedback and comments on the strengths and weaknesses of candidates will be generated using the Interview template. This report will be shared with the applicants at a later stage ensuring that the personal data from the evaluators remain confidential.

### How to prepare for the Interview?

The interviews are conducted in an online modality by MS Teams. All candidates are advised to connect on the scheduled time to avoid any potential technical issues that may cause delays. One of the PMO members will grant them access to the Interview room. They should ensure that the device is charged, the camera, microphone and the Internet are functioning well. It is recommended to control background noise and set up natural lighting.

Candidates are expected to prepare a 10-minute presentation about their academic background and motivation to join the chosen project. They are free to choose any format for that purpose.

### Final selection of candidates and allocation of positions

- After the conclusion of the interview consensus meeting, the CarrerasPathfinders Recruitment Supervisory Committee (RSC) will sum the points from the first stage and the interview stage and generate a ranked list indicating the candidates that have passed the minimal threshold of 80/100.

---

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the Application evaluation summary reports provided by MADRI+D during the initial stage should not be confused with the Interview evaluation summary reports. The MADRI+D reports will be shared with the applicants as well.

- Candidates who are not selected but have scored above the threshold will be included in the reserve list. The reserve list is formed to ensure a backup pool of qualified candidates if any successful applicant declines the offer.
- Candidates will be notified of the funding decision by email and receive an Evaluation Summary Report of their application. Following this notification, applicants will have a 10-working-day window to submit request redress if they believe that there has been a shortcoming in the evaluation procedure (see the redress instructions in the Guide for Applicants).

## Annex I

[Doctoral Candidate 1:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC1 SIRT4ALL Deciphering the impact of the interplay between SIRT7 and PAX5 in B-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia

**Supervisor:** Alejandro Vaquero

**Planned secondment(s):** MAX-PLANCK GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FORDERUNG DER WISSENSCHAFTEN EV (Bad Nauheim, Germany)

[Doctoral Candidate 2:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC2 EPIDHEM Identifying Epigenetic determinants in Primary Immunodeficiencies in their Progression to Hematological Malignancies

**Supervisor:** Esteban Ballestar

**Planned secondment(s):** EpiQMax (Munich, Germany) and Ospedale Sant Raffaele (Milan, Italy)

[Doctoral Candidate 3:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC3 NonCoBALL The noncoding face of the 3D genome of B-ALL

**Supervisor:** Gregoire Stik

**Planned secondment(s):** Erasmus University Medical Center (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

[Doctoral Candidate 4:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC4 exoLYMPH Design of a cell-based system for the production of therapeutic exosomes with anti-lymphoma properties

**Supervisor:** Gaël Roué

**Planned secondment(s):** ZeClinics (Barcelona, Spain) and EVerZom (Paris, France)

[Doctoral Candidate 5:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC5 LYMPHSPACE Deciphering the spatial architecture of lymphoma

**Supervisor:** Eduard Porta

**Planned secondment(s):** Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (Boston, USA)

[Doctoral Candidate 6:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC6 EPINEWTHHER\_B-ALL Exploring the Connection Between Epigenetic Abnormalities and Resistance to Therapy in Pediatric B-ALL patients

**Supervisor:** Manel Esteller

**Planned secondment(s):** Quimatryx

[Doctoral Candidate 7:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC7 M6A-CIRCLE-MM Understanding the influence of m6A machinery on circRNA biogenesis in multiple myeloma

**Supervisor:** Sonia Guil

**Planned secondment(s):** University of Oslo (Oslo, Norway) and NanoBioMedical Centre, Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznan, Poland)

#### [Doctoral Candidate 8:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC8 MonEC Monitoring how endothelial cells contribute to non-Hodgkin lymphoma relapses

**Supervisor:** Mariona Graupera

**Co-supervisor:** Veronica Rodilla

**Planned secondment(s):** Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB, Barcelona, Spain) and Heidelberg University (Heidelberg, Germany)

#### [Doctoral Candidate 9:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC9 GAIN4ALL GATA3 Inhibition as a therapy for T-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia

**Supervisor:** Laura Belver

**Planned secondment(s):** University of Belgrade (Belgrad, Serbia)

#### [Doctoral Candidate 10:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC10 HaemGas-GATA2 Haemogenic gastruloids: a novel approach to model GATA2 deficiency in vitro with embryonic organoids

**Supervisor:** Anna Bigas

**Planned secondment(s):** Non-genetic Heterogeneity and Leukaemia Evolution Lab, Brunel University (London, UK)

#### [Doctoral Candidate 11:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC11 INTEGRAML Exploiting the Integrated Stress Response pathway for acute myeloid leukemia treatment

**Supervisor:** Sergi Cuartero

**Planned secondment(s):** Institute of Innate Immunity (Bonn, Germany)

#### [Doctoral Candidate 12:](#)

**Acronym + Title:** DC12 noncoDLBCL Decoding the role of the noncoding genome in diffuse large B cell lymphoma

**Supervisor:** Biola Javierre

**Planned secondment(s):** NeoVirTech (Toulouse, France)

#### Doctoral Candidate 13:

**Acronym + Title:** DC13 Live-N-Chill The fetal liver niche role in hematopoietic development and childhood leukemia

**Supervisor:** Vincenzo Calvanese

**Planned secondment(s):** Barts Cancer Institute, QMUL (London, UK), King's College and The Roger Williams Institute of Hepatology (London, UK)

#### Doctoral Candidate 14:

Acronym + Title: DC14 TargetAML A functional approach to identify novel combinatorial treatments for AML

**Supervisor:** Marcus Buschbeck (together with senior postdoc Jeannine Diesch)

**Planned secondment(s):** Eisbach Bio GmbH (Planegg, Germany)