



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# RETURNS TO THE CZU

## GRANT CALL AND APPLICANT GUIDELINES



Co-funded by  
the European Union



**OPJAK.cz/en**  
**MSMT.cz/en**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE OF THE GRANT CALL AND APPLICANT GUIDELINES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. GENERAL RULES FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Applicant, eligibility requirements and proof of eligibility	4
2.2. Structure and required components of the Return Grant application at the CZU	5
2.2.1. Mandatory attachments	6
2.3. Project duration	6
2.4. Budget and eligibility of costs	7
2.4.1. Eligible activities/costs	7
2.4.2. Ineligible activities/costs	7
2.4.3. Grant allocation	8
2.5. Project team	8
2.5.1. The main researcher	8
2.5.2. The mentor	8
2.5.3. The expert support team	9
<b>3. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF RETURN GRANTS</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1. Mobility	10
3.2. Educational development	11
3.3. Care allowance	11
<b>4. OUTPUT REQUIREMENTS OF THE RETURN GRANT</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1. Publications	11
4.2. Open Science	12
4.2.1. Ad a) Open Access to peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from research funded under the project	12
4.2.2. Ad b) Research data management	13
<b>5. THE GENDER DIMENSION</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>6. ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL RIS3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7. THE METHOD OF SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION AND FREQUENCY OF CALLS</b>	<b>15</b>
7.1. The method of submitting the application	15
7.2. Frequency of calls	15
<b>8. VALUATION OF RETURN GRANT APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
8.1. The Evaluation process	16
<b>9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RETURN GRANTS</b>	<b>19</b>
9.1. Establishing the legal relationship between the main researcher and the CZU	19
9.2. Interim Activity Report of the Return Grant	19
9.3. Changes in the implementation of the Return Grants	20
9.4. Completion of implementation and final evaluation of the Return Grant	21
<b>10. DOCUMENTATION OF UNITS</b>	<b>21</b>
10.1. The main researcher	22
10.2. The mentor	22
10.3. The expert support team	22
10.4. Mobility	22
10.5. Educational development	23
10.6. Care allowance - care of a child or a close person	23
<b>11. PUBLICITY, AFFILIATION, PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>12. CO-FUNDING OF RETURN GRANT COSTS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>13. SANCTIONS FOR BREACH OF OBLIGATIONS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>14. TIMELINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RETURN GRANT SCHEME</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>15. ABBREVIATIONS USED</b>	<b>26</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE OF THE GRANT CALL AND APPLICANT GUIDELINES

(1) These Grant Call and Applicant Guidelines are based on Annex 05\_ČZU\_NVT\_Return Grants Scheme for PA2 and are drafted to provide a clear, comprehensive guide for applicants and main researchers of the Return Grants. The Return Grants Scheme at the CZU has been designed in accordance with the conditions of Call No. 02\_24\_037 Returns (OP JAK) and with the policies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in particular the principles of equal opportunities and sustainable development, as well as the rules on state aid set out in the OP JAK Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries – General Part and Specific Part, and in applicable Czech and EU legislation.

(2) In Czech language: Any reference to persons in the masculine grammatical form (e.g. applicant, main researcher, employee, collaborator, student, researcher) is to be understood as a generic masculine, used in a gender-neutral sense irrespective of gender identity.

(3) These Grant Call and Applicant Guidelines are published on the website of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (hereinafter “the CZU”) at the [Czech University of Life Sciences Prague – Science and Research – Returns to CZU](#) for the entire duration of the application and evaluation period.

(4) The conditions of the competition are further defined in the CZU internal regulation Rector’s Decision No. 7/2025.

(5) The competition is announced within the implementation of the project Returns to the CZU, Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24\_037/0013835, funded under the Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský, Call No. 02\_24\_037 Returns, as amended, Priority 1.

## 2. GENERAL RULES FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

### 2.1. Applicant, eligibility requirements and proof of eligibility

An eligible applicant (main researcher) of a Return Grant is a researcher who meets following criteria:

- A) as of the date of application submission, the applicant is either a PhD holder (or equivalent), or a student enrolled in a doctoral study programme at the CZU, and simultaneously
- B) is currently on a career break<sup>1</sup>, which must be documented by an official certificate or a comparable document issued by the relevant authority or by the CZU personnel system, or
- no more than 12 months have passed between the end of the career break and the date of submitting the application. This must be documented by an official certificate or comparable document issued by the employer or personnel system confirming that the period since the end of the career break has not exceeded 12 months.

Applicant's obligations:

- A researcher may serve as main researcher of only one Return Grant.
- If the main researcher is a doctoral student, the project topic must not be identical to their dissertation topic. This must be confirmed by a signed declaration of the applicant and their supervisor.
- Duplicate or combined funding from other schemes is not permitted (e.g. Czech Science Foundation Return Grants). To ensure compliance, the following control measures apply:
  - Each main researcher and each team member must submit a declaration stating that their employment or research activity financed from this grant is not simultaneously funded from any other grant source.
  - The Evaluation Committee, in cooperation with the CZU Development and Project Management Office, will verify the absence of duplicate funding. Applications found to involve duplicate or combined funding will be rejected.
- If the main researcher is a junior researcher or a PhD student, the project must include a mentor, who provides methodological and expert support (the mentor is not part of the project team).

---

<sup>1</sup> A career break is a period of at least 180 consecutive calendar days during which the researcher (the applicant for the Return Grant) was unable to carry out research and development (R&D) activities in full due to maternity or parental leave, long-term care responsibilities, or long-term illness.

It is permitted for the researcher to perform R&D activities during the career break under an employment relationship with the beneficiary, up to 0.3 FTE per month on average, calculated over the number of months during which such work was carried out. However, in no individual month may the researcher's R&D engagement during the career break exceed 0.5 FTE.

The duration of the career break immediately before and after any interruption is added together, provided that the total duration of all interruptions does not exceed 30 calendar days.

The minimum required length of the career break (180 calendar days) is extended by the number of days of such interruptions (i.e. if the career break is interrupted for 30 days, its total minimum duration, including all interruptions, must be at least 210 days).

## 2.2. Structure and required components of the Return Grant application at the CZU

- A. Applicant identification (main researcher), including relevant research and development experience. If the applicant has completed PhD studies, it must be specified whether they are applying as a junior<sup>2</sup> or senior<sup>3</sup> researcher.

### Attachments:

- CV – max. 3 pages (education, employment, international experience, key outputs)
  - proof of PhD degree (or equivalent) – diploma or confirmation of successful defence; PhD students must provide confirmation of study
  - documents confirming compliance with the definition of a career break (see Chapter 10)
  - motivation letter explaining the reasons for returning to research after a career break, and how the grant will support the restoration and development of the applicant's research career; it must also include motivation, qualifications, skills and relevant experience (including potential for team leadership). Max. 1 page.
- B. Identification of the host unit where the project will be implemented (CZU Faculty / relevant Department).
- C. Project abstract.

- D. State of the art, project contribution and objectives, including planned activities (e.g. mobility, training), research methods, and anticipated results (including the principles of open science).

A Return Grant supports the reintegration of researchers into the domestic academic environment and the development of their expertise. The state of the art, project contribution and objectives must be clearly defined. Planned activities should be directly linked to these objectives and may include: formulation of hypotheses, methodological design, data collection and analysis, experiments, publications, international mobility (research stays, conferences, networking), skills development and mentoring. Methods may include quantitative, qualitative or experimental approaches. Anticipated outputs may include publications, patents, methodologies or other contributions. Activities and outputs must be coherent and aligned with the overall objectives.

- E. Engagement of the main researcher – 0.5 to 1.0 FTE<sup>4</sup> each month throughout the entire project duration.
- F. Project team composition (where applicable) – positions, FTE levels and justification; maximum team size (excluding the PI): 4 members, max. 2.0 FTE.
- G. Project timeline: minimum 12 months; maximum 36 months.
- H. Budget – structure and justification of unit costs and quantities, in accordance with the “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator”.
- I. Description of alignment with the research aims/topics of the relevant CZU Faculty, and the project's contribution to the applicant's institution.
- J. Description of alignment with CZU infrastructure and equipment.

---

<sup>2</sup> A junior researcher is a researcher within 7 years of being awarded their PhD degree (calculated from the date of the successful defence of the doctoral thesis) or an equivalent qualification (equivalent to ISCED level 8).

<sup>3</sup> A senior researcher is a researcher for whom more than 7 years have passed since the award of their PhD degree (calculated from the date of the successful defence of the doctoral thesis) or an equivalent qualification (equivalent to ISCED level 8). Further information on the distinction between junior and senior researchers is provided in the Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský, Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries – Specific Part, Call Returns.

<sup>4</sup> FTE = full-time employment

- K. For PhD student applicants: thesis topic and abstract + explanation of differences between the dissertation topic and the Return Grant topic (the two must not be identical).
- L. Description of alignment with the National RIS3 Strategy.
- M. Gender dimension in the research content.

### 2.2.1. Mandatory attachments

- CV of the main researcher
- proof of PhD degree (or equivalent)
- documents confirming the career break
- motivation letter
- statement of the head of the host unit regarding the applicant's integration, contribution and career potential
- declaration that the Return Grant topic is not identical to the dissertation topic (if applicable)
- declarations of all team members on the absence of duplicate funding
- if a mentor is included:
  - mentor's declaration of consent
  - mentor's CV
- completed budget form ("Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator")
- completed RIS3 alignment form (Navraty\_RIS3\_grant\_MSMT)
- career development plan – the plan must describe the applicant's professional objectives, the sustainability and further development potential of their research career, the planned development of their scientific and managerial competences, and the specific steps envisaged to achieve these objectives in connection with the implementation of the Return Grant. Max. 1 page

## 2.3. Project duration

The project duration must be between 12 and 36 months.

The **Return Grant may be interrupted** for up to 12 months, provided that the planned project end date does not exceed 30 June 2029 (end of the parent project "Returns to the CZU"). Interruptions do not count towards the total duration. See Chapter Changes in Project Implementation.

The **project start date may be postponed** by up to 12 months from 1 May 2026.

## 2.4. Budget and eligibility of costs

The main researcher must complete the budget in the “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator”. Detailed instructions are available in the document Calculator Guide – Application for Return Grant. Faculty support staff may assist applicants in case of uncertainty.

The budget includes:

### **Mandatory cost item:**

- Main researcher (MR)

### **Optional cost items:**

- Mentor (optional only for senior researchers)
- Support expert team for the implementation of the Return Grant
- Mobility of the main researcher
- Educational development of the main researcher of the Return Grant
- Contribution for the care of a child or close person

The core unit cost is “Return grant – main researcher”. All additional unit activities may only be used if the main researcher's core activity is included.

A flat-rate overhead of up to 15% applies, calculated from the minimum personnel costs specified in the “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator”. Any costs above this limit must be financed outside the project budget.

Funds will be provided by the CZU; the faculty/department contributes 10% from its own resources. All team members must have a formal employment relationship with the CZU (employment contract or agreement to perform work).

### **2.4.1. Eligible activities/costs**

The Return Grant may include:

- research carried out by the main researcher (mandatory)
- expert support team (optional)
- mentor (mandatory for junior researchers)
- MR mobility (optional)
- MR educational development (optional)
- care of a child or close person allowance (optional)

### **2.4.2. Ineligible activities/costs**

Ineligible activities and related costs include:

- construction or building work
- purchase of real estate
- commercial activities (e.g. contract research, provision of research services)
- outsourcing of project activities as a whole
- teaching within degree programmes

Further ineligible costs include:

- purchase of motor vehicles or transport equipment
- purchase of capital assets

### 2.4.3. Grant allocation

The expected allocation per one Return Grant is minimum CZK 448,920. Depending on duration, the maximum budget per project is CZK 9,982,562. Total allocation for all Return Grants: CZK 61,474,776.

## 2.5. Project team

### 2.5.1. The main researcher

The **main researcher** of a Return Grant under the Returns to the CZU scheme must commit between **0.5 and 1.0 FTE** in every month throughout the entire duration of the project. The main researcher is responsible for the overall leadership and management of the Return Grant and may involve additional members of the support expert team - specialist, technical, or otherwise relevant staff - who, under the MR's supervision, contribute to the implementation of the Return Grant. These team members are not returning from a career break. The total employment of the main researcher at the CZU may not exceed 1.2 times the standard full-time monthly workload.

The main researcher may be:

- **A PhD student** – an individual enrolled in a doctoral study programme at the CZU who is currently on a career break, or for whom no more than 12 months have passed since returning from a career break.
- **A Junior researcher** – an individual for whom no more than 7 years have passed since the award of their PhD degree (calculated from the date of the successful defence of the doctoral thesis) or an equivalent qualification (equivalent to ISCED level 8). This period may be extended to account for maternity or parental leave, long-term illness (more than 90 days), or long-term caregiving responsibilities (more than 90 days). The applicant must clearly highlight such circumstances in their CV and provide appropriate supporting documentation (e.g. proof of maternity/parental leave). The 7-year period is assessed as of the date the Return Grant application is submitted.
- **A Senior researcher** – an individual for whom more than 7 years have passed since the award of their PhD degree (calculated from the date of the successful defence of the doctoral thesis) or an equivalent qualification (equivalent to ISCED level 8).

### 2.5.2. The mentor

The involvement of a mentor is compulsory if the main researcher of the Return Grant under the Returns to the CZU scheme is a PhD student or a junior researcher. If the main researcher already meets the criteria for serving as a mentor, the project does not require a separate mentor. The mentor may be engaged at a maximum of 0.2 FTE, and their total monthly employment at the CZU must not exceed 1.2 times the standard full-time workload.

A mentor must be a senior researcher with adequate professional experience in the field relevant to the Return Grant and with more than 7 years having passed since the award of their PhD degree (calculated from the date of the successful defence of the doctoral thesis) or an equivalent qualification (equivalent to ISCED level 8).

The mentor serves as a key support figure for the main researcher. Their role includes providing scientific and methodological guidance by regularly discussing and consulting the research plan, research design and methodology, formulation of research questions, and interpretation of results. In addition, the mentor contributes practical experience – helping to connect the project with relevant professional networks, advising on appropriate publication channels and funding opportunities, and supporting the MR in developing career-related competences, including scientific communication,



research team leadership, and project management. The mentor also monitors whether the project is meeting its objectives and expected outputs at the required level of quality and assists the MR in ensuring the project's scientific excellence.

The Return Grant application must include the mentor's CV and a signed declaration of consent confirming their willingness to participate in the project. During the implementation of the Return Grant, the mentor must submit regular activity reports using the OP JAK reporting template and, in the final report, must provide an assessment of the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved.

### **2.5.3. The expert support team**

The expert support team (EST) is an optional component of a Return Grant. Members of EST work under the supervision of the MR and contribute to the implementation of the Return Grant. Members of EST (except the MR) are not returning from a career break. Their involvement is limited strictly to scientific, technical and other professional activities that support the achievement of the project's research objectives. Their work may include conducting experiments; performing fieldwork and laboratory measurements; collecting and analysing samples; processing and evaluating data; preparing graphs and tables; and drafting experimental protocols, methodologies, and standard operating procedures. They may also carry out literature searches, prepare supporting materials for publications, presentations, or scientific reports, and contribute to the interpretation of findings under the guidance of the main researcher. In addition, they may be responsible for the operation and maintenance of research equipment, instrument calibration, and the keeping of laboratory notebooks or technical documentation for experiments.

The project team may consist of up to five individuals in total (1+4) - that is, the MR plus up to four members of the EST. The combined FTE of all EST members (excluding the main researcher and mentor) must not exceed 2.0 FTE. Each individual's FTE must correspond to their role and responsibilities within the Return Grant and must not exceed the permitted limits. The total allocated FTE for the Research Support Team cannot be changed during project implementation; if a team member leaves, they must be replaced to ensure that the financial allocation for the Research Support Team remains unchanged.

If the MR is a PhD student or a junior researcher, the mentor (engaged at a maximum of 0.2 FTE) is a mandatory member of the wider team structure; however, the mentor is not counted towards the limit of four Research Support Team members nor towards the 2.0 FTE cap.

#### **Members of the Research Support Team may include:**

- doctoral students (enrolled in a doctoral study programme, full-time or part-time, at a higher education institution),
- technical staff (employees responsible for the operation or maintenance of research infrastructure or other specialist technical roles; their work within the Return Grant must not consist of carrying out research; administrative and research staff are not classified as technical staff for the purposes of this call),
- researchers (individuals who create new or extend existing knowledge, typically by designing and/or conducting activities involving the conception or development of new knowledge, processes, methods, or systems, and by applying scientific concepts and theories; researchers must hold at least a Master's degree and be engaged in R&D activities),
- other specialists (other relevant professional experts).

Each member of the EST must submit a declaration confirming that their employment or research activity financed through this grant is not simultaneously funded from any other grant source.

Members of the Research Support Team must submit monthly activity reports using the OP JAK “Overview of Activities” template and provide these to the faculty officer responsible for Return Grants at the relevant faculty.

### **3. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF RETURN GRANTS**

#### **3.1. Mobility**

Mobility of the MR is an optional component of a Return Grant. It serves as a motivational element supporting a faster reintegration after a career break, with the aim of providing motivation, inspiration and the exchange of experience within an international research environment. The mobility is expected to enhance the qualifications and expertise of the main researcher, facilitate the transfer of know-how to the Czech research organisation, and support networking with experts at foreign institutions. In the long term, mobility contributes to the internationalisation of research. Mobility is available exclusively to the MR; it is not an eligible cost for any other team members (EST or mentor).

The duration of the mobility must be between 1 and 6 months. For the purposes of Return Grant applications at the CZU, one month of mobility is defined as 20 working days, and the total duration of mobility must not exceed 120 working days. The mobility stay may be divided into a maximum of two parts, provided that the combined duration does not exceed six months.

The mobility may be interrupted, provided that the planned end date of the mobility does not exceed the expected end date of the Return Grant. The mobility must be substantively and logically linked to the research carried out within the project. The proposed mobility will be assessed as part of the evaluation of the Return Grant. If mobility is included in the application, it must be completed as planned.

During the mobility, the main researcher may carry out only non-economic activities (as defined in paragraph 20 of the Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation, 2014/C 198/01). At the host institution, the main researcher must not perform any activities that would confer an advantage to the host institution under state-aid rules. Activities that do not provide such an advantage include in particular:

- the implementation of the main researcher’s own research as defined in the Return Grant application,
- academic activities of the main researcher,
- activities aimed at enhancing the skills and competences of the main researcher.

The main researcher’s know-how must not be used for any economic activity of the host institution in a manner that could result in an unlawful advantage under state-aid regulations. To demonstrate compliance with these conditions, the beneficiary must submit a scan of a contract/agreement/memorandum of cooperation (or an equivalent document) between the CZU and the host institution. This document must explicitly state that the main researcher will perform only non-economic activities at the host institution, and must be submitted no later than one month before the mobility begins. If it is determined that the main researcher has carried out economic activities during the mobility, this constitutes a breach of the Return Grant conditions, and all related mobility costs will be deemed ineligible.

The unit cost for mobility is calculated to cover the main researcher’s travel expenses (travel to the destination, local transport costs, accommodation, per diems and pocket money, and consumables related to practical training, etc.). Personnel costs of the main researcher are not included in this unit cost.

For the mobility unit cost to be eligible, the main researcher must work at least four hours per working day during the mobility.

### **3.2. Educational development**

Educational development of the main researcher is an optional component of a Return Grant. This activity is intended to enhance the main researcher's qualifications and expertise, support the transfer of know-how, and provide access to training necessary for developing key competences. This includes, in particular, specialist training, team leadership, managerial skills, preparation of grant applications and orientation within grant schemes... Specialist training may also be undertaken outside the Czech Republic. Training aimed at developing soft skills is eligible only if delivered within the Czech Republic. Training and professional development may take the form of accredited or non-accredited courses, delivered either in person or through distance learning.

This activity is available exclusively to the main researcher; it is not an eligible cost for any other project team members (EST or mentor).

Expenses related to professional qualification programmes, such as medical attestation, pre-attestation preparation, bar examinations, or similar long-term professional certification schemes, are not eligible. Although optional, the activity must be completed if it is included in the project application.

### **3.3. Care allowance**

The care of a child or a close person is an optional component of a Return Grant. The main researcher may request support for expenses reasonably expected to arise in connection with personal care for a child who has not yet begun compulsory pre-school education (i.e. has not reached the age of five by the end of August of the calendar year in which compulsory pre-school education begins under the Schools Act), or in connection with long-term personal care for a close person in a long-term adverse health condition, during periods in which the main researcher is implementing the Return Grant and is therefore unable to provide such care personally.

The main researcher becomes entitled to the allowance for each commenced calendar month of the Return Grant during which the above conditions are met. The unit cost corresponds to the monthly allowance for the care of a child or a close person. The allowance is paid as part of the main researcher's salary and is subject to rules analogous to those governing minimum personnel costs.

## **4. OUTPUT REQUIREMENTS OF THE RETURN GRANT**

### **4.1. Publications**

Every applicant for a Return Grant must state in the application the fulfilment of the minimum publication outputs, which are defined as follows:

- At least one popularisation output for every 12 months of the Return Grant implementation.
- Scientific and application outputs:
  - One-year and two-year grants: 1  $J_{imp}$ -type article or 1 patent with a licence agreement.
  - Three-year grants: 2  $J_{imp}$ -type articles or 1 patent with a licence agreement.

A condition for recognising fulfilment of the minimum publication outputs is the publication of the article or the completion of the peer-review process with a positive recommendation for publication by the relevant journal editor. This must be achieved no later than on the date of submission of the Final Report of the Return Grant. If the Return Grant lasts only one year, the publication may be submitted no later than 6 months after submitting the Final Report.

The main researcher implementing the Return Grant at the CZU under the OP JAK-funded project must be listed as first author or corresponding author. The contribution of the Return Grant must be clearly identifiable in the Acknowledgement, under the project registration number: CZ.02.01.01/00/24\_037/0013835 (see Chapter 11).

The CZU Return Grant is considered a starting grant - a tool to support researchers and doctoral students returning from a career break. It is expected that no later than one year after the completion of the Return Grant, the main researcher will submit at least one application for a follow-up research grant from an external (non-CZU) provider (grant agency), national or international. The main researcher must be the principal investigator or co-principal investigator of such a grant. The topic of the follow-up grant must not be identical to the Return Grant topic but should build upon and further develop it to avoid double funding.

Compliance with this condition is demonstrated by submitting confirmation from the external grant provider that the application was submitted and passed the formal check for further evaluation (if such confirmation is issued by the provider).

## **4.2. Open Science**

A mandatory condition for funding under the Return Grant is the application of Open Science principles as an approach to the scientific process based on open collaboration and the effective dissemination of knowledge. To ensure efficient and practical cooperation in applying Open Science principles, it is essential that all project outputs intended for publication follow the principle “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”.

In line with this approach, the main researcher of the Return Grant is required to ensure in particular:

- a) Open Access to peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from research funded under the project;
- b) research data management in accordance with the FAIR principles and Open Access to such data.

Open Science, however, covers a broader range of approaches and practices that promote transparency, collaboration and the reuse of research outputs. In addition to the mandatory areas listed above, researchers may also apply other open scientific practices, such as sharing research software and code, open methodologies and protocols, the use of open educational resources, or involving the public in research (Citizen Science).

The basic procedures for implementing Open Science principles are described in the document Open Science in the Return Grant: A Guide for Main Researchers.

### **4.2.1. Ad a) Open Access to peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from research funded under the project**

1. The main researcher must ensure Open Access to peer-reviewed scientific publications related to research results of the Return Grant. In particular, the main researcher must ensure:

- the deposit of a machine-readable electronic copy of either the final publisher’s version or the final accepted peer-reviewed manuscript (i.e. after incorporation of comments from peer review) in a trusted (disciplinary or general) repository without undue delay after the date of

publication, and no later than 30 calendar days from the date the output is published; in exceptional and justified cases, this period may be extended to a maximum of 60 calendar days;

- immediate Open Access (i.e. free of charge, permanent and unrestricted, without embargo) to the deposited publication with the possibility of further reuse under the conditions of the latest available version;
- public licensing of the publication under Creative Commons Attribution International (CC BY 4.0). Monographs and other long-form textual outputs may be made available under a public licence restricting modification or commercial use (e.g. CC BY-NC 4.0, CC BY-ND 4.0, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0);
- provision of information (references) to any additional research output or tools required to verify the conclusions of the peer-reviewed publication as part of the metadata record of the publication in a trusted (disciplinary or general) repository.

2. The main researcher must retain the rights to the publication to an extent enabling them to comply with the above-mentioned obligations;

3. Metadata of deposited publications must be publicly accessible and machine-readable so that they comply with the FAIR principles and the General Recommendation for Metadata (in Czech only).

Costs associated with ensuring Open Access to research outputs, including Article Processing Charges (APC), are considered eligible. Researchers may receive additional support for these expenses outside the Return Grant budget. The exact amount depends on the total number of approved Return Grants.

#### **4.2.2. Ad b) Research data management**

The main researcher must ensure responsible research data management of collected or created data during project implementation in accordance with the FAIR principles, in particular by:

- preparing a Data Management Plan (DMP) in line with the FAIR principles and updating it regularly. The DMP must be submitted for substantive review to the **Open Science Centre** (of the CZU Library), first after six months from the start of the physical implementation of the grant, and then updated and submitted as needed;
- depositing research data in accordance with CZU internal requirements, especially data related to scientific peer-reviewed publications in a trusted repository as soon as possible and in accordance with the DMP;
- ensuring Open Access to the deposited research data in line with the DMP, preferably under the latest available version of the Creative Commons Attribution International (CC BY 4.0) licence or its equivalent, where appropriate. Open Access to data follows the principle “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”, with regard to privacy, personal data protection, confidentiality, legitimate commercial interests and intellectual property rights of third parties, state security or other legitimate interests and restrictions. If Open Access to some or all data cannot be provided, the reasons must be stated in the DMP and reviewed regularly;
- providing information (references) to any additional research outputs, tools or instruments needed for re-use or validation of the research data as part of the metadata record of the dataset in a trusted repository (unless legitimate reasons for restricting such information apply).

**Metadata of deposited research data** must be publicly available (to the extent compatible with legitimate interests or restrictions) and machine-readable.

Costs related to research data management (e.g. processing, storage, sharing or anonymisation) are considered eligible.

Applicants may consult the **Open Science Centre** (of the CZU Library) ([openscience@lib.czu.cz](mailto:openscience@lib.czu.cz)) and faculty data stewards at any time before or during project implementation. In the subject line of emails, applicants must include: 'Return Grant: First Name Surname' (e.g. Return Grant: Tester Testerson) to ensure timely processing of the inquiry. This support is essential for ensuring full compliance with Open Science principles and for high-quality, efficient research data management under the FAIR principles.

## 5. THE GENDER DIMENSION

To increase the quality and relevance of research outputs for society, the CZU will assess and monitor how applicants for the Return Grant address the gender dimension in their proposed research. The applicant must specify in the project application whether the gender dimension (i.e. the influence of sex or gender on the research process or outcomes) is relevant and how it will be considered.

The gender dimension is particularly relevant when the research:

- involves work with human participants or outputs intended for human use,
- includes biological or social processes where sex or gender differences may appear,
- evaluates data that may be influenced by sex or gender.

In such cases, the applicant must briefly describe how the gender dimension will be addressed, e.g. disaggregation of data by sex, balanced selection of respondents or experimental units, or considering possible differences in interpreting results.

If the research focuses solely on technical or laboratory processes without direct impact on living organisms or humans and the gender dimension is irrelevant, the applicant must provide a factual justification. The evaluation will consider whether the applicant's approach to the gender dimension is appropriate given the project's nature and objectives.

## 6. ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL RIS3 STRATEGY

The Return Grant application must clearly describe how the project fits into the National Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (National RIS3 Strategy). The applicant must specify which RIS3 areas or missions are relevant and how the project contributes, e.g. with new knowledge, methods, technologies, or by transferring results into practice. The aim is to demonstrate alignment with current Czech research, development and innovation priorities.

## 7. THE METHOD OF SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION AND FREQUENCY OF CALLS

### 7.1. The method of submitting the application

The application is submitted in Czech or English language electronically via the online interface at [projekty.czu.cz](http://projekty.czu.cz). The link for submitting grant applications will be made available on the project website [Czech University of Life Sciences Prague – Science and Research – Returns to the CZU](#) on the date when the application intake opens, i.e. on **1 December 2025**.

The application including all required attachments must be submitted electronically no later than **31 January 2026, 23:59**.

A printed and signed version of the application including original attachments must be submitted by the main researcher to the faculty Return Grant officer immediately after electronic submission, no later than 4 February 2026, 12:00.

Attachments that must be submitted in original form:

- A statement of the Head of Department and the Dean (co-funding and job position creation)
- The mentor's declaration of consent to participate
- A declaration that the Return Grant topic is not identical to the dissertation topic
- A declaration of absence of duplicate funding for support expert team members

### 7.2. Frequency of calls

At least one grant call will be announced within this programme.

Deadlines and conditions will be published through official CZU communication channels.

The grant call will include the submission phase, expert evaluation, project approval, and allocation of funds.

Repeated calls will only be launched if funds remain unallocated.

If funds remain after the first call, an additional call will be opened. The repeated call may occur within the same calendar year or at the earliest possible date to ensure efficient use of resources. Conditions for the repeated call may be adjusted based on the experience from the first round and available budget.

## 8. VALUATION OF RETURN GRANT APPLICATIONS

### 8.1. The Evaluation process

- 1) A formal compliance check is performed by the designated faculty Return Grant officers.
- 2) The following general conditions of the call will be checked:
  - Submission within the deadline
  - Eligibility of the main researcher to submit a grant application
  - Submission of the required CVs, including correct classification of the researcher as junior/senior
  - FTE of the main investigator and members of the expert support team (if applicable)
  - Timeline consistent with the call rules
  - Inclusion of a mentor if the main researcher is a PhD student or junior researcher
  - Confirmation that the work effort of the main researcher and all members of the support expert team is not simultaneously financed from other grant sources
  - For PhD student applicants: verification that the Return Grant topic is not identical to the dissertation topic
  - Preliminary assessment of alignment with RIS3
  - Statement of the head of the host department/dean of the faculty
  - Verification that the project budget is in line with the call rules
  - Signature of the main researcher
  - Total monthly FTE of each project team member at the CZU does not exceed 1.2× full-time employment
- 3) For applications that do not pass the formal eligibility check, the subsequent procedure will depend on the nature of the deficiency. The seriousness of any shortcomings identified in the project proposal will be determined by the Vice-Rector for Research and Development (chair of the evaluation committee and principal guarantor of the return grant), either independently or in consultation with the full evaluation committee.
  - In the case of rectifiable deficiencies, the applicant will be invited to submit the required amendments or additional information within a specified deadline. Failure to remedy the shortcomings within this period will result in the proposal being excluded from the competition.
  - In the case of non-rectifiable deficiencies, the application will not be forwarded for further evaluation and will be excluded from the competition. Non-rectifiable deficiencies include, in particular: failure to meet the application deadline; the main researcher's ineligibility to submit a grant proposal (see the definition of main researcher in Section 2.1 of the call); absence of a positive statement from the head of the host department (the dean) for the return grant; overlap between the topic of the applicant's doctoral thesis and the proposed return grant project; workload allocation for the principal investigator or members of the supporting research team (if applicable) that is inconsistent with the rules; and the double or multiple funding of research activities from concurrent grant sources.
- 4) Applications that pass the formal check are transferred to the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research, who—together with the project's chief methodology expert—selects and appoints a suitable internal and external evaluator for each application.
- 5) Each application will be evaluated by two reviewers (opponents):
  - one internal reviewer from the CZU,
  - one external reviewer from outside the CZU.



If the applicant is from the CZU, the internal reviewer must not be from the same department as the main investigator. The selection of external reviewers will rely on the CZU reviewer database created under previous OP VVV projects ("Increasing the Quality of the Internal Grant Scheme at the CZU"). If a suitable reviewer cannot be found in this database (e.g. due to a highly specific scientific topic), a reviewer outside the database may be appointed. Such a reviewer must meet the same qualification criteria as those in the database.

All reviewers must meet impartiality criteria and must not have a conflict of interest with the applicant or their department. Reviewers must be able to objectively evaluate the quality of the proposal and its contribution to the field. Reviewers must not have co-authored any publications with the applicant in the last 5 years.

## 6) Evaluation Criteria for Return Grant Applications at the CZU

Evaluation criterion	Scoring range (each evaluator):*	
	Internal reviewer	External reviewer
1. Eligibility of the applicant for the Return Grant (compliance with the defined parameters)	0 – 10	0 – 10
2. Project potential – professional quality of the research plan, objectives and activities of the Return Grant, expected results and outputs, and grant timeline	0 - 10	0 - 10
3. Alignment of the project with the research aims/topics of the relevant CZU faculty, including relevance and contribution to the institution	0 - 20	0 - 20
4. Alignment of the Return Grant with faculty/CZU infrastructure and equipment	0 - 5	0 - 5
5. Motivation, qualifications, skills and experience of the applicant in relation to the focus of the Return Grant (incl. team leadership potential, if relevant)	0 - 10	0 - 10
6. Alignment with the PhD dissertation topic/progress for PhD students (the topics must not be identical), if relevant	0 - 5	0 - 5
7. Career development potential of the main researcher following the Return Grant (career plan)	0 - 5	0 - 5
8. 3E of the budget (economy, efficiency, effectiveness), its specificity, justification and link to the Return Grant activities, including consistency with the "Return Grant Application Calculator"	0 - 10	0 - 10
9. Relevance of the team composition (if applicable), realism and adequacy of FTE levels	0 - 5	0 - 5
10. Gender dimension in the research content	0 - 5	0 - 5
11. Compliance of the Return Grant with the general OP JAK call conditions (especially excluded activities)	0 - 5	0 - 5

\* Each of the two reviewers awards points independently in all criteria.

The total maximum number of points that an applicant can obtain will vary depending on which target group they belong to and which evaluation criteria are relevant for the given application.

### **Maximum possible score**

The maximum total score depends on the target group and the team composition:

- Main researcher with PhD, with implementation team – 170 points
- Main researcher with PhD, without implementation team – 160 points
- PhD student, with implementation team – 180 points
- PhD student, without implementation team (mentor not included in team) – 170 points

- 7) The final evaluation of Return Grant applications will be carried out by the evaluation committee based on the point scores, the assessments of individual reviewers, and the relevance of the research topic, which must correspond to the strategy and focus of the CZU and the participating faculties. The evaluation committee will be chaired by the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research, and each participating CZU faculty will nominate one committee member.

Each proposal will be evaluated by two independent experts (see point 4), who will assign points in each category. The total score will be calculated as the sum of the points awarded. After completion of the evaluation, a ranking of applicants will be created based on the relative proportion of points obtained. The highest-scoring projects will be recommended for funding within the available financial resources. To be eligible for funding, a project must achieve at least 60% of the maximum possible score. If a project receives less than 60%, it is considered insufficiently rated and cannot be supported. Applicants will be informed of the results and will receive feedback on the evaluation of their project.

In the event of a tie between applicants, the selection of the successful candidate will be based on the assessment of three selected/additional criteria, applied in the following order:

1. Higher score in criterion no. 2
2. Higher score in criterion no. 3
3. Higher score in criterion no. 1
4. If the tie persists after applying the above criteria, the decision will be made by random selection.

- 8) After the end of the evaluation period and the funding decision, the main researchers of the awarded grants will be informed that their grant has been approved for funding. The reviews of individual applications will be made available to the respective main researchers.
- 9) If any of the successful applicants declines to implement the grant, the next applicant in the ranking with the highest number of points (from the reserve list) will be contacted, provided that the total score reaches at least 60% of the maximum possible points. In such a case, the budget of the reserve applicant's grant will also be considered to ensure it fits within the overall available financial resources of the "Returns to the CZU" call.
- 10) Repeated calls in case of unspent financial resources: If financial resources remain unallocated after the first round of the grant procedure, an additional call will follow. The repeated call will be launched either within the same calendar year or at the earliest possible date to ensure efficient use of available financial resources. The conditions of the repeated call may be adjusted based on the experience from the first round and the remaining budget.

## 9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RETURN GRANTS

### 9.1. Establishing the legal relationship between the main researcher and the CZU

A Contract on the Allocation of Financial Resources will be concluded with successful applicants whose Return Grant proposals are approved for funding. The contract will define the allocation of financial resources, rules for handling them and the details and conditions for the implementation of the Return Grant. Such a contract will also be concluded in the case where the main researcher is a PhD student at the CZU. The establishment of the employment relationship between the main researcher and the CZU will follow the internal regulations of the CZU, particularly the CZU salary regulations and CZU career rules. If the contract is not signed before the planned starting date of the project, it will not be possible to start the project.

If the main researcher is already an employee of the CZU, their existing employment contract will be amended to include a new (part-time) workload related to the implementation of activities within the Return Grant. If the main researcher has no existing employment relationship with the CZU, a new employment contract will be signed with the main researcher and the CZU for the purpose of implementing the Return Grant activities.

### 9.2. Interim Activity Report of the Return Grant

The main researcher is obliged to submit an Interim Activity Report (based on the OP JAK template) to the faculty Return Grant officer of the relevant faculty, where the main researcher is employed or enrolled as a PhD student, every 6 months.

The **Interim Activity Report** must include the following parts:

- a description of activities performed during the previous period;
- the workload (FTE) of the main researcher and/or support expert team members;
- an evaluation of progress and work on outputs;
- any changes;
- plans for the next monitored period;
- a mobility report (if relevant);
- a Data Management Plan (if relevant for the given report – the main researcher submits the first Data Management Plan for assessment after the first 6 months of physical project implementation and then updates and submits it as needed);
- a financial statement through “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator” and all required supporting documents for the respective unit cost (the list of required documents will be included in the Contract on the Allocation of Financial Resources).

Attachment:

An overview of activities carried out by the support expert team and the mentor (if involved) for the reported period.

### Mobility Reports

Mobility reports must include:

- the title of the Return Grant;
- the name of the main researcher;
- the main researcher’s FTE within the Return Grant;
- the destination and name of the host institution;

- the duration of the mobility;
- a brief description showing the objective of the mobility;
- information on whether the mobility objective was achieved;
- confirmation that the main researcher performed only non-economic activities at the host institution;
- signatures of the main researcher, their immediate supervisor (or authorised representative), and a relevant representative of the host institution.

A mobility report must be submitted for each mobility stay after its completion.

### 9.3. Changes in the implementation of the Return Grants

The main researcher must request any change in the implementation of the Return Grant in written form. The main researcher submits the change request to the faculty Return Grant officer using the official Project Change Request Form. The decision on the change is made by the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research (the Main Guarantor of the Return Grant), either personally or after consulting members of the evaluation committee, depending on the seriousness and scope of the requested change. All changes must be approved before they are implemented.

The main researcher acknowledges that certain changes cannot be made. **The non-changeable parameters of the Return Grant are:**

- change of the main researcher of the Return Grant;
- change of the objective and main research topic of the Return Grant;
- increase of the total financial allocation of the Return Grant;
- setting personnel costs below the values defined in the “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator” and “Activity-3\_return-grant-implementation-calculator”;
- changing the version of the “Activity-3\_return-grant-implementation-calculator” (the version approved at the start of the Return Grant remains valid throughout the entire implementation period).

**Examples of minor changes** requiring approval by the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research:

- changes in implemented activities, e.g.:
  - change of mobility destination,
  - changes within the Return Grant team (number of members or changes to their FTE levels - while keeping the total FTE unchanged);
- changes to the Return Grant timeline;
- temporary interruption of the Return Grant.

**Examples of major changes** requiring approval by the full CZU evaluation committee:

- transfers between budget items/unit costs exceeding 10% of the value of the given item/unit;
- change of the research methodology;
- postponement of the start date of the Return Grant;
- early termination of the Return Grant (including the required procedure—submission of the Final Activity Report in case of early termination);
- changes in the planned results and outputs of the Return Grant.

## 9.4. Completion of implementation and final evaluation of the Return Grant

It is the obligation of the main researcher to prepare the Final Activity Report (according to the OP JAK template) after the completion of the standard project duration or in the case of early termination. The Final Activity Report summarises the course of the project, the scientific results achieved, and the contribution of the project to the main researcher's host unit. It includes an overview of scientific publications acknowledging the implemented Return Grant and a financial statement of the funds used. The grant provider, i.e. the CZU, evaluates the success of the project based on this report and may request additions or explanations of unmet objectives.

The main researcher must submit the Final Activity Report to the faculty Return Grant officer no later than on the last calendar day of the Return Grant implementation. Together with the Final Activity Report, the main researcher is also required to complete the Evaluation Questionnaire, which serves for data collection and the preparation of the Evaluation Report of the Returns to the CZU project. The questionnaire will summarise the main researcher's experience with the implementation of the grant, the impact of the grant on their professional career, and the identification of any barriers to successful completion.

If a mentor is involved, they shall assess the achievement of the project objectives.

### **Mandatory components of the Final Activity Report:**

- Summary of the implementation of the Return Grant.
- Summary of results/outputs achieved, including completed training and mobilities, as well as any additional contributions not defined elsewhere.
- List of published scientific outputs, as defined by the valid version of the Methodology for Evaluating Results of Research Organisations and Targeted Support for Research and Innovation Programmes (RVVI).
- For  $J_{imp}$  articles, the acknowledgement must include the title and number of the Return Grant; otherwise, the publication will not be recognised as a project output.
- Final financial statement using the "Activity-3\_return-grant-implementation-calculator" and all other relevant documents required for each selected unit cost (the list of these documents will form part of the Contract on the Allocation of Financial Resources).
- Further career development plan.

Final deadline for submission of the Final Activity Report is 30 April 2029.

In the case of early termination of the Return Grant, the main researcher must submit a Final Activity Report summarising the results achieved up to the termination date.

## 10. DOCUMENTATION OF UNITS

The main researcher must attach to the Return Grant application documents confirming that they are currently on a career break, or that no more than 12 months have passed between the end of the career break and the date of submitting the grant application. One of the following documents must be provided (listed in order of preference; if the first is not available, the second is used, and so on):

- A document from the employer's personnel system (e.g. from the CZU) proving the interruption of work due to long-term illness, childcare or care for another person, or a document confirming that the period from returning from the career break to the date of submitting the grant application does not exceed 12 months.

- A confirmation issued by the relevant authority – for example, a certificate of maternity or parental leave issued by the labour office or by the employer’s personnel department.
- A medical certificate or a similar document in cases of long-term illness (with full respect for personal data protection).

The eligibility of Return Grant costs (i.e. unit costs submitted for reimbursement) will be documented during and at the end of the project according to the items entered in the budget (or in the calculator “Activity-3\_return-grant-application-calculator”). During the implementation of Return Grants, the main researcher will submit the accounting of units using the version of the “Activity-3\_return-grant-implementation-calculator” published on the project website. The mandatory cost item is the main researcher of the Return Grant (and, in the case of a junior researcher or PhD student, also the mentor). Optional cost items include mobility of the main researcher, educational development of the main researcher, and any care allowance. For each cost item, a specific method is defined to demonstrate eligibility.

### **10.1. The main researcher**

- A one-time scan of employment contract (including amendments).
- Any additional contractual documents indicating the amounts to be paid.

### **10.2. The mentor**

- A scan of their employment contract (including amendments).
- A scan of the activity overview (OP JAK template).

### **10.3. The expert support team**

- A scan of their employment contract (including amendments).
- A scan of the activity overview (OP JAK template).

### **10.4. Mobility**

- A scan of the contract/agreement/memorandum of cooperation or a similar document between the beneficiary and the host institution, which must include a condition specifying that the main researcher of the Return Grant will perform only non-economic activities at the host institution;
- A mobility report (as part of the Interim Activity Report) – signed by the main researcher, their immediate supervisor or authorised representative, and the relevant representative of the foreign host institution;
- The travel order of the main researcher of the Return Grant. The travel order must indicate (among other things) that per diems were paid to the employee. If the per diems were paid via another document, this document must also be submitted.

## 10.5. Educational development

- The original certificate/confirmation of completion of the training;
- In the case of education/training delivered in a distance-learning format, proof of participation in the form of a screenshot from a laptop/PC/smartphone or a data export generated by the communication platform used, clearly showing the presence of the main researcher of the Return Grant at the training event, as well as the bottom toolbar of the device screen displaying the date and time the screenshot was taken / the date of the training;
- For non-accredited external courses, an original proof of payment (invoice, receipt, etc.) for the training course.

## 10.6. Care allowance - care of a child or a close person

- A declaration of the main researcher of the Return Grant stating that they personally provide care for a child who has not yet begun compulsory pre-school education, or for a close person in a long-term adverse health condition (as defined in § 3(c) of the Social Services Act), and that this care was the reason for their career break. The declaration must include the name, surname, and date of birth of the child;
- In the event of any change in the circumstances of care for the above-mentioned child or close person, a notification from the main researcher of the Return Grant regarding such changes that affect eligibility for the Care Allowance;
- For childcare: a copy of the child's birth certificate, identity card, or passport showing the child's date of birth / a copy of a document confirming the child's admission to pre-school education, or the use of childcare services under the Act on Children's Groups or under the Trade Licensing Act, including the child's date of birth (as proof of age, if applicable);
- For care of a close person: a copy of a document confirming the provision of field, outpatient, or respite care services to the person cared for / a copy of the application for a care allowance submitted by the person cared for / a copy of the decision granting the care allowance to the person cared for / a copy of a declaration submitted to the Czech Social Security Administration confirming that the main researcher and the dependent person live in a shared household / a copy of the decision granting long-term caregiver's benefit (under § 41a et seq. of the Sickness Insurance Act) to the main researcher / a copy of a medical confirmation stating that personal care for the person is required.

## 11. PUBLICITY, AFFILIATION, PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

All results and outputs of the Return Grant must comply with the publicity rules of the OP JAK programme. This means that all publications, presentations, press releases, and any other forms of communication about the project must contain the appropriate information about its funding, including the OP JAK logo, the European Union logo, and, where relevant, the logo of other supporting bodies (e.g. the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). These pieces of information must be clearly visible on all materials to ensure transparency and public awareness of the support provided from public funds.

Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure proper handling of intellectual property (IP) in cases where relevant scientific results or outputs arise within the project, such as patents, utility models, software, or other protected innovations. This includes the proper registration and documentation of these

outputs, potential IP rights registration, licensing or protection of sensitive data, while at the same time enabling their use in accordance with the project funding rules. In such cases, all procedures must follow the internal regulations of the CZU in Prague.

All publications, including those defined within the minimum publication output requirements (both scientific and popularisation outputs), that have been produced with the financial support of the awarded CZU Return Grant must include an Acknowledgement section clearly identifying the contribution of the CZU Return Grant to the publication.

In the Acknowledgement, the main researcher is obliged to provide the following information:

- the title of the Return Grant,
- the Return Grant number assigned in the internal CZU system, and
- the following text, in Czech or English:

“Spolufinancováno Evropskou unií v rámci Operačního programu Jan Amos Komenský, Ministerstva školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy ČR, číslo projektu: CZ.02.01.01/00/24\_037/0013835.”

“Co-financed by the European Union within the framework of the Jan Amos Comenius Operational Programme, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, project number: CZ.02.01.01/00/24\_037/0013835.”

## 12. CO-FUNDING OF RETURN GRANT COSTS

The faculty/department commits to co-financing 10% of the eligible costs of the Return Grant.

## 13. SANCTIONS FOR BREACH OF OBLIGATIONS

### **Sanctions for breach of publicity requirements:**

- If the main researcher of the grant does not comply with the publicity rules set by OP JAK, they will first be notified in writing and required to remedy the issue within a specified period (60 days).
- If the issue is not remedied, the grant support may be reduced by 10% of the relevant part of the funding.

### **Sanctions for failure to submit Interim or Final Reports:**

- The obligation to submit the Interim Activity Report (every 6 months) and the Final Activity Report after project completion is essential for transparent monitoring of the Return Grant.
- If the main researcher does not submit a report within the required deadline, they will be asked to provide it within 30 days.
- If the delay exceeds an additional 60 days, the funding of the Return Grant may be suspended.

### **Sanctions for failure to achieve grant results and outputs:**

- If project objectives are only partially fulfilled, the CZU evaluation committee may assess the severity of the deviation and proportionally reduce the grant support, up to 20% for failing to publish a key output.
- In the case of substantial non-fulfilment (e.g. no relevant results), the grant may be fully terminated, and the main researcher is obliged to return part or all of the funds provided.



Researchers who repeatedly violate the established conditions may be temporarily or permanently excluded from future grant calls and programmes at the CZU. Sanctions for breaching obligations related to the Return Grant are discussed and decided by the CZU evaluation committee, chaired by the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research. Each case is assessed individually.

If the committee decides that financial resources must be returned, the CZU will always reclaim these funds from the main researcher's home unit — at the level of the department or, where applicable, the faculty.

## **14. TIMELINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RETURN GRANT SCHEME**

### **1 December 2025**

Announcement of the call for submission of Return Grant applications, including all application conditions in accordance with the Return Grant Scheme at the CZU.

### **By 31 January 2026**

Deadline for submission of Return Grant applications at the CZU.

### **1 February 2026 – 15 March 2026**

Formal and substantive evaluation of submitted applications. Each application is assessed by two reviewers, one of whom is external (outside the CZU).

### **15 March 2026 – 31 March 2026**

Evaluation of applications and reviewer reports by the CZU evaluation committee (the committee is composed of members from each participating faculty and chaired by the CZU Vice-Rector for Science & Research).

### **By 31 March 2026**

Publication of the results of the CZU Return Grant competition.

### **1 April 2026 – 30 April 2026**

Preparation of contracts between the CZU and the main researcher of the Return Grant, including obtaining the required signatures.

### **1 May 2026**

Expected start date of the implementation of funded Return Grants at the CZU.

### **1 May 2026 – 30 April 2029**

Implementation of the supported Return Grants, ongoing monitoring, and evaluation of Interim Activity Reports.

### **By 30 April 2029**

Final deadline for submission of the Final Activity Reports by all main researchers.

### **By 30 June 2029**

Evaluation of the Final Activity Reports and preparation and submission of the final report to the funding provider (the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports), including the delivery of the Evaluation of the Return Grant Scheme.

## 15. ABBREVIATIONS USED

**3E** - economy, efficiency, effectiveness of the budget  
**APC** – Article Processing Charge  
**CC BY 4.0** – Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International  
**CC BY-NC 4.0** – Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial 4.0 International  
**CC BY-NC-ND 4.0** – Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial–NoDerivatives 4.0 International  
**CC BY-ND 4.0** – Creative Commons Attribution–NoDerivatives 4.0 International  
**CV** - Curriculum Vitae  
**CZK** – Czech Koruna  
**CZU / ČZU** – Czech University of Life Sciences Prague  
**DMP** – Data Management Plan  
**EST** – Expert Support Team  
**EU** – European Union  
**FAIR** – Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable (data principles)  
**FTE** – Full-Time Equivalent  
**IP** – Intellectual Property  
**ISCED** – International Standard Classification of Education  
**Jimp** – Journal with Impact Factor (internal shorthand)  
**MR** – Main Researcher  
**MSMT / MŠMT** – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic  
**NC** – NonCommercial (as used in Creative Commons licence names)  
**ND** – NoDerivatives (as used in Creative Commons licence names)  
**OP JAK** – Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský (OP Jan Amos Komenský)  
**PA2** – Priority Axis 2 (from cited Annex 05\_ČZU\_NVT)  
**PC** – Personal Computer (appears in the context of screenshots)  
**PhD** – Doctor of Philosophy / Doctoral degree  
**PI** – Principal Investigator  
**R&D** – Research and Development  
**RIS3** – Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation  
**RVVI** – Research, Development and Innovation Council (Czech: Rada pro výzkum, vývoj a inovace)