CALL DOCUMENTATION

Return Grants at the University Institute

Updated as of December 1, 2026

Project registration number:	CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848
Project title:	Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break
Institution:	Tomas Bata University in Zlín

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Purpose of the Call Documentation

The Call Documentation constitutes the basic framework for the preparation, submission and evaluation of Return Grant applications submitted under the project "Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break" (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848) implemented within the Programme Johannes Amos Comenius (P JAC). Its purpose is to clearly define the objectives and focus of the supported projects, establish the conditions for participation of eligible applicants, and specify the requirements regarding the content, form and structure of project applications. At the same time, the Call Documentation sets out the rules for the evaluation and selection of projects and serves as a tool for ensuring transparency, equal treatment and comparability of individual project proposals throughout the evaluation process.

Introduction to Return Grants

The UNI Return Grants (hereinafter referred to as "Return Grants") follow on from the Bursar's Directive SK/10/2026 "*Implementation of a Project Financially Supported by the Operational Programme Johannes Amos Comenius – Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break*" and the UNI Director's Directive SŘ/03/2026 *"Principles of the Return Grants Competition at the University Institute Funded by P JAC"*. The objective of individual Return Grants is to support high-potential researchers after a career break. The award of a Return Grant should facilitate the applicant's reintegration into the research environment, compensate for the inability to participate in scientific activities during the career break, and increase the competitiveness of the research team with the aim of strengthening the scientific community of the University Institute of Tomas Bata University in Zlín (hereinafter referred to as "TBU").

Return Grants shall be implemented within the research directions of the Centre of Polymer Systems (hereinafter referred to as "CPS") of UNI.

Terminology of the Call Documentation

Principal Investigator of a Return Grant (hereinafter referred to as the "Principal Investigator") is an applicant whose project proposal has been approved for implementation.

Career Break is a period of at least 180 and no more than 1,095 calendar days during which an applicant for a Return Grant was unable to fully perform research and development (R&D) activities due to maternity leave, parental leave, long-term caregiving responsibilities, or long-term illness. During the Career Break, a researcher might simultaneously perform R&D activities under an employment relationship corresponding to a maximum of 0.3 FTE per month (i.e. the level of R&D employment at the respective institution), calculated as an average over the months during which such work was performed. However, the researcher's R&D employment during the Career Break must not exceed 0.5 FTE in any individual month. The terms maternity leave and parental leave shall be understood in accordance with their meaning under the Labour Code.

Long-term Caregiving , according to the rules of P JAC, is defined as a necessary long-term personal care (excluding maternity and/or parental leave) provided either to a child until the commencement of compulsory pre-school education, i.e. until the end of August of the calendar year in which the child reaches five years of age, or to a close person within the meaning of Section 22(1) of the Civil Code who is in a long-term adverse health condition pursuant to Section 3(c) of Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, as amended. According to the rules of P JAC, Long-term Illness means temporary incapacity for work under Act No. 187/2006 Coll., on Sickness Insurance, as amended, and the Labour Code. Further specifications concerning the duration of a Career Break in the case of annual leave taken immediately after maternity leave, as well as procedures relating to interruptions of a Career Break, are set out in the document "Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries – Specific Part – Returns Call / Version 2" (see Appendix 1 - *Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries – Specific Part – Returns Call*).

Mentor is an experienced researcher, specifically a research direction guarantor at UNI-CPS, a principal investigator of a development project at CPS, or a senior researcher in the relevant research direction. The Mentor participates in the implementation of the Return Grant as a more experienced researcher and provides expert supervision and methodological guidance during the implementation of research activities.

Project Proposal is a proposal for a Return Grant research project intended for researchers returning from maternity leave or parental leave following a career interruption due to long-term childcare, care for a close person, or long-term illness (i.e. following a Career Break – see the definition of Career Break).

Researcher of a Return Grant is a person who creates new knowledge or expands existing knowledge, typically by directing and carrying out activities involving the conception or creation of new knowledge, processes, methods and systems, and by applying scientific concepts and theories. Such a person must hold at least a Master's degree, must be employed by TBU throughout the implementation of the Return Grant, and must be engaged in R&D activities.

Junior researcher is a researcher who is a doctoral student or who obtained a Ph.D. degree (from the date of the dissertation defence) or its equivalent [ISCED level 8 equivalent (International Standard Classification of Education)] no more than seven years ago. This period shall be extended by periods of maternity leave, parental leave, long-term illness (more than 90 days), care for a family member (more than 90 days), pre-certification training, or military service. An applicant for a Return Grant is required to highlight these circumstances in their professional CV and provide supporting documentation (e.g. confirmation of maternity/parental leave). The seven-year period shall be calculated as of the date of submission of the Return Grant application.

Senior researcher is a researcher who obtained a Ph.D. degree (from the date of the dissertation defence) or its equivalent (ISCED level 8 equivalent) more than seven years

ago. This period shall be extended by periods of maternity leave, parental leave, long-term illness (more than 90 days), care for a family member (more than 90 days), pre-certification training, or military service. An applicant for a Return Grant is required to highlight these circumstances in their professional CV and provide supporting documentation (e.g. confirmation of maternity/parental leave). The seven-year period shall be calculated as of the date of submission of the Return Grant application.

Applicant for a Return Grant is an academic staff member or researcher holding a Ph.D. degree or its equivalent, or a doctoral student, who meets the conditions specified below.

1. Competition Requirements

- The Return Grant application (hereinafter also referred to as the "Application") shall be submitted via the email address navraty@cps.utb.cz.
- The submission of Applications shall open on **15 June 2026**.
- The duration of a Return Grant shall be at least 12 months and no more than 34 months. Implementation may commence no earlier than 1 September 2026 and must be completed no later than 30 June 2029.
- The Application shall be submitted by an applicant who is an academic staff member or researcher holding a Ph.D. degree or its equivalent, or who is a doctoral student. If the applicant is a doctoral student, the project topic must not be identical to the topic of their doctoral thesis. In all cases, the Career Break condition must be fulfilled.
- The Principal Investigator must allocate a workload corresponding to 0.5 FTE to 1.0 FTE to the Project.
- The Principal Investigator may involve additional staff members in the implementation of the Return Grant (forming a Supporting Expert Team for the implementation of the Return Grant) who participate in the implementation of the Return Grant under the Principal Investigator's supervision. The Supporting Expert Team may consist

of researchers only and may comprise a maximum of four members with a total workload not exceeding 2.0 FTE.

- The applicant must not participate simultaneously in more than one Return Grant and must not be involved in more than one Return Grant proposal. One applicant may act as Principal Investigator of a maximum of one Return Grant.

2. Mandatory Project Outputs

During the implementation of the Return Grant, the Principal Investigator shall achieve the following mandatory results no later than the end date of the sustainability period of the P JAC Project CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848 (i.e. by 30 June 2030):

- one project proposal submitted under a national call[1];
- one project proposal submitted under an international call[2];
- during the implementation of each Return Grant, the Principal Investigator shall ensure the conclusion of at least one collaboration agreement[3];
- during the implementation of each Return Grant, the Principal Investigator shall complete international mobility (see Section *3.5. International Mobility of the Principal Investigator of a Return Grant*);
- during the implementation of each Return Grant, at least one patent application shall be filed;

[1] A national research, development or innovation programme means a programme in which only institutions from the Czech Republic may participate as principal applicants, irrespective of whether the provider is a Czech or a foreign entity. The Principal Investigator of the implemented Return Grant must be involved in the submitted project proposal.

[2] An international research, development or innovation programme means a programme whose conditions do not restrict participation exclusively to institutions from the Czech Republic, irrespective of whether the provider is a Czech or a foreign entity.

[3] Collaboration with another institution or its component part for the purpose of sharing experience or implementing activities of the supported project. Compliance shall be documented by a copy of a Collaboration Agreement (agreement, contract, memorandum or a similar document) from which the contracting parties, purpose, objective, substantive description of the collaboration, and the period for which the agreement is concluded can be verified.

- each Return Grant shall generate additional outputs according to the following scheme:

  a) Jimp peer-reviewed publication of the type article, chapter or book - mandatory minimum of 1;

  b) Jimp peer-reviewed publication of the type letter, review, conference paper or an article published in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal – mandatory minimum of 1;

  c) contribution presented at a scientific event and published in a book of abstracts – mandatory minimum of 1;

  d) applied result in the form of a functional sample (Gfunk) or utility model (Fužit) – mandatory minimum of 1.

  At least one J_{imp} output of the type article, letter or review shall be ranked in the first quartile (Q1) according to the Article Influence Score in the Web of Science Core Collection database or according to the Scopus SJR indicator.

Each Principal Investigator shall, throughout the implementation of the Return Grant, participate in training courses, workshops or other educational activities aimed at improving expertise and qualifications, particularly in the areas of professional development, team leadership, managerial competencies, preparation of grant applications, etc., to a minimum extent of 4 hours per year.

In the case of national and international grant applications, only those applications that demonstrably relate to the research focus of the implemented Return Grant and whose subject matter is research and related activities (and not, for example, education only) shall be taken into account.

3. Preparation of the Application

The Return Grant shall be implemented within the existing research directions at CPS, namely:

- Polymer Processing;
- Rubber Technologies;
- Environmental Technologies;
- Biomaterials;
- Nanomaterials and Advanced Technologies;
- Energy and Composite Materials and Devices.

Before submitting a Return Grant proposal, the applicant is required to obtain the approval of the guarantor of the relevant research direction for the implementation of the Project within that research direction. Contact details of the research direction guarantors are available on the CPS[4] website.

3.1. Applicant

The applicant shall submit a Return Grant application under the appropriate category of Return Grants, i.e. Senior Return Grants or Junior Return Grants, according to their classification as Researcher – Senior or Researcher – Junior as specified in this Call Documentation.

The employment involvement of the Principal Investigator may be planned within the range of 0.5–1.0 FTE in each month throughout the implementation period of the Return Grant.

If the applicant is a doctoral student, the project topic must not be identical to the topic of their doctoral thesis. This fact shall be documented by the applicant's Declaration of Honour submitted as an appendix to the Return Grant application (Appendix 2 – *Confirmation of the Doctoral Thesis Topic*).

[4] Research teams

3.2. Supporting Expert Team

The applicant may establish a Supporting Expert Team for the implementation of the Return Grant. This team may consist of a maximum of four researchers (excluding the Principal Investigator), and the total workload of all researchers in the team must not exceed 2.0 FTE in any month throughout the implementation period of the Return Grant. Any person meeting the criteria of a Researcher defined for this type of Return Grant may become a member of the Supporting Expert Team. Their role must be described and justified in the application

Members of the Supporting Expert Team participate in the implementation of the Return Grant under the supervision of the Principal Investigator.

3.3. Mentor

The involvement of the Mentor in a Return Grant may not exceed 0.2 FTE in any month throughout the implementation period of the Return Grant. The Mentor shall be available to the Principal Investigator for consultations and methodological guidance in connection with the implementation of the Project, to an extent corresponding to their involvement in the Project. The Mentor provides the evaluation committee with comments on the progress of the Return Grant in the Progress Reports, comments on Change Requests submitted by the Principal Investigator, and evaluates the achievement of the Project objectives in the Final Report.

3.4. Requirements for the Project Application and Its Appendices

The project application shall include:

- Project Proposal – specified in more detail in Section *4.1 Project Proposal – Basic Information*;
- Professional CV – the Principal Investigator shall submit a structured CV in the EUROPASS format;

- Motivation letter of the Return Grant applicant – describing the motivation for addressing the given research topic;
- Career plan (vision) – focused on the short-term period (approximately two years) following the completion of the Project, describing how the knowledge and experience acquired through the Return Grant will be utilised for the further development of the research team and UNI-CPS;
- Statement of the research direction guarantor – the Project shall be implemented within one of the six research directions carried out at UNI-CPS (*see Section 3 Preparation of the Application*). Inclusion of the Project within the selected research direction must be approved in advance by the relevant research direction guarantor. The statement shall also include the guarantor's assessment of the applicant's integration into the workplace, their potential contribution to the development of the workplace, and their career development potential;
- Confirmation of compliance with the definition of a Career Break;
- Confirmation by the applicant's supervisor and the applicant for a UNI Return Grant, where the applicant is a doctoral student, regarding a possible overlap between the topic of the Return Grant and the doctoral thesis topic (where the applicant is a doctoral student; *Appendix 2 – Confirmation of the Doctoral Thesis Topic*);
- Declaration of Honour confirming that the applicant is not and will not be involved in any other Return Grant (Appendix 3 – Declaration of Honour on Non-Participation in Another Return Grant);
- Cost breakdown (in accordance with Section *3.7 Budget for the Implementation of Return Grants*) and justification thereof;
- Information on compliance with the National RIS3 Strategy within the implementation of the Grant (see Section *3.9 Compliance with the National RIS3 Strategy*);
- Statutory declaration by the Project Investigator (Appendix 4 – *Statutory Declaration of the Project Investigator*);

- Data Management Plan (Appendix 5 – *Data Management Plan*).

3.5. International Mobility of the Principal Investigator of a Return Grant

International mobility of the Principal Investigator is one of the mandatory outputs of the Return Grant and shall comply with the following requirements:

- It must have a substantive and logical connection to the research being carried out;
- The minimum duration of international mobility is one month. The maximum duration is six months. Mobility exceeding two months may be divided into two periods, provided that their combined duration does not exceed six months;
- It is mandatory for each Return Grant;
- The Principal Investigator shall undertake mobility at a foreign organisation on the basis of a memorandum, invitation letter or similar document between a Czech and a foreign research organisation;
- Following completion of the mobility, the Principal Investigator shall prepare a report on the mobility, which shall form part of the nearest *Progress Report* or, if the mobility is carried out during the final project period, part of the *Final Report*;
- A mobility working day (person-day) is defined as a day on which the researcher performs at least four hours of work. For the purposes of Return Grants, one month equals 20 person-days and six months equal 120 person-days;
- Only non-economic activities may be carried out during the mobility. Eligible activities include in particular:

    a) implementation of the Principal Investigator's own research, i.e. the research plan defined in the Return Grant application

    b) academic activities of the Principal Investigator

    c) development of the Principal Investigator's skills and competencies, etc.

3.6. Training of the Principal Investigator of a Return Grant

Training of the Principal Investigator is also among the mandatory activities of the Return Grant:

- The purpose of the training is to provide the Principal Investigator with an opportunity to broaden their knowledge in relevant fields and further develop their competencies;
- The training shall primarily include professional training as well as training in team leadership, grant application preparation, managerial skills, etc.;
- Both accredited and non-accredited courses or educational programmes are eligible. These may be internal or external and may be delivered in person or remotely (always in a synchronous online format);
- Professional training may also be undertaken outside the Czech Republic;
- Soft-skills training may only be undertaken within the Czech Republic;
- Training is mandatory for the Principal Investigator, with a minimum duration of 4 hours for each year of the implementation of the Return Grant;
- Costs related to professional training such as specialist certification examinations, pre-certification training, attorney examinations, or similar types of long-term professional training are not eligible.

3.7. Budget for the Implementation of Return Grants

The budget of a Return Grant consists of unit costs based on the calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application_4.1 (Appendix 6 – *Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application*). The main unit activity is "Return Grant – Principal Investigator (Research)". Of this amount, approximately 87% represents the personnel costs of the Principal Investigator and approximately 13% represents a flat-rate amount intended for costs directly related to the implementation of the Principal Investigator's Return Grant, provided that the condition of meeting the minimum personnel costs for the Principal Investigator is met.

Costs are calculated and reported using so-called productive hours.

The following supplementary unit activities must be assigned to the main unit activity:

- international mobility of the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant;
- training and development of the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant;
- Mentor;
- Supporting Expert Team for the implementation of the Return Grant.

Supplementary unit activities cannot be implemented independently, i.e. without the involvement of the Principal Investigator.

Costs related to childcare or care for a close person are not eligible.

The flat-rate amount is intended primarily for the following purposes:

- Material costs, in particular the purchase of laboratory equipment necessary for achieving the Project objectives;
- Travel costs related to the travel activities of the Principal Investigator (e.g. participation in conferences). Travel costs may only be claimed by the Principal Investigator;
- Service costs, in particular conference fees. Conference fees may only be claimed by the Principal Investigator.

Note: *During the implementation of the Return Grant, the Principal Investigator is not entitled to receive other funding for the same activities from other funding sources. In particular, the Principal Investigator may not serve as a principal investigator of another grant with the same focus (e.g. Specific Higher Education Research, GA CR Return Grants, etc.) or participate in mobility with the same purpose funded from another source. It is not possible to combine the costs of a Return Grant under this call with support provided within the Return Grants Group of Grant Projects funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GA CR). Financial resources for the implementation of the Return Grant shall be provided by TBU. Members of the research team may participate in the implementation of the Project only on the basis of an employment relationship (employment contract).*

3.8. Gender Dimension in Research Content

In Return Grants, the gender dimension in research content shall be taken into account in accordance with the principles of P JAC. Guidance describing the principles of the gender dimension in research is available on the website of The Centre for Gender and Science (NKC)-gender[5]. The gender dimension in research is one of the evaluation criteria assessed by reviewers during the evaluation of project proposals.

Consideration of the gender perspective may not be relevant for every project. However, reflection on possible biological differences (sex) or differences in the experiences, perspectives and needs of women and men (gender) is always meaningful where people are:

- subjects of research: surveys involving people, analysis of data relating to people, research involving human tissues, etc.;
- users of research or innovation results: consumers, patients and other users;
- persons potentially affected by the results: research or innovation whose outcomes may affect the environment in any way, research involving animals or animal tissues whose results may subsequently be extrapolated to humans, etc.

3.9. Compliance with the National RIS3 Strategy

The submitted Return Grant proposal must be consistent with the themes of the National RIS3 Strategy specified in the *Thematic Area Cards document*[6]. Identification of the potential compliance of the Return Grant with the RIS3 Strategy (assignment to a selected thematic area) is a mandatory part of the Return Grant application.

If the applicant has identified compliance of the proposed Project with one of the RIS3 themes, they shall select "YES" on the relevant worksheet in Appendix 7 – Returns_RIS3 and subsequently highlight in yellow a maximum of three rows on the worksheets "DS & ST", "DS & KETs", and/or "DS & SHUV", and/or a maximum of one row on the "RIS3 Missions" worksheet.

[5] NKC_Jak-na-zmenu-A5_2021_WEB-1.pdf
[6] Thematic Area Cards

4. Completion of the Return Grant Application

The Return Grant application shall be submitted in English only. The template is available as Appendix 8 – Project Application Template. The application, including all appendices, shall be submitted by email to navraty@cps.utb.cz.

The maximum length of the project application (excluding appendices) is 10 A4 pages using Times New Roman font, size 12, single line spacing, and margins of 2 cm on all sides.

4.1. Project Proposal - Basic Information

- Project title;
- Project abstract;
- Identification of the research direction within which the Project will be implemented;
- Project description;
- Description of the Project objectives;
- Description of the Supporting Expert Team:
    - information on the members of the Supporting Expert Team and a description of their involvement in the planned research activities;
    - identification of the Mentor (name and involvement in the Project, including FTE);
- Planned activities (research, mobility) and research methods;
- Results and outputs of these activities;
- Project timetable;
- Identification and description of the gender dimension in the research content;
- Total requested amount according to the Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application_4.1 (see Appendix 6 – *Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application*);
- Justification of the Project budget items (included in Appendix 6 – Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application), including justification of the selected unit activities and their quantities, and information on mandatory items – mobility, training and flat-rate costs;

- Description of compliance with the National RIS3 Strategy within the implementation of the Grant;
- Description of the application of Open Science principles;
- Gender dimension in research;
- Other appendices to the project application as specified in Section *3.4 Requirements for the project application and its appendices.*

5. Evaluation of Return Grant Applications

Project applications shall be evaluated by external reviewers (hereinafter referred to as "reviewers"), comprising two reviewers from outside TBU and two international reviewers. In both cases, the reviewers shall be experts with experience in research and development (R&D) and scientometric indicators at the level of an H-index ≥ 25 and at least 1,000 citations of their own publications excluding self-citations. To ensure the integrity of the evaluation process and the required quality of the selected projects, the list of proposed reviewers shall remain fixed.

For each project proposal, reviewers shall provide both a numerical score and a verbal assessment within each of the categories specified below (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory).

The overall evaluation of a project proposal shall result in one of the following recommendations:

- Recommended for funding;
- Recommended for funding subject to the availability of funds;
- Insufficient;
- Not recommended for funding.

The Director of UNI shall appoint an Evaluation Committee consisting of at least four TBU employees. The Chair of the Evaluation Committee shall be the Director of UNI. In the event of a potential conflict of interest (e.g. the Director of UNI serving as the Mentor of a proposed project) or in other justified cases (e.g. illness or business travel), a Vice-Chair designated by

the Director of UNI shall act in their place. The Evaluation Committee shall meet at least twice per year. Based on the reviewers' assessments, the Evaluation Committee shall prepare a ranking of projects and, taking into account the overall evaluation results and the availability of financial resources, shall decide on the funding of Return Grants. In the event that two project proposals receive the same score, the deciding factor shall be the total score obtained in the categories evaluating the project potential and the professional qualifications of the Principal Investigator. Applicants shall be informed of the outcome of their application no later than six months after submission of the application.

Submitted projects shall be evaluated in the following categories:

(i) Return Grant: project potential, scientific merit and quality of the research plan with regard to the relevance of the topic and its potential application in R&D, including its relevance and contribution to UNI-CPS and the research direction within which the Return Grant will be implemented. The objectives and activities of the Return Grant, the related results and outputs, the feasibility of the timetable and the planned mobility shall also be evaluated (maximum 25 points);

(ii) Applicant: eligibility of the Return Grant applicant (Section 2.1), assessment of the professional qualifications of the research team (R&D experience, scientometric indicators, potential for team leadership), the applicant's motivation to address the proposed topic, and compliance with the Open Science requirements defined in Section 9 (maximum 25 points);

(iii) Involvement of other team members: composition of the research team and effectiveness of the utilisation of individual team members (maximum 10 points);

(iv) Compliance with research direction: consistency of the submitted project proposal with the research direction within UNI-CPS in which the Project will be implemented (maximum 10 points);

(v) Compliance with the P JAC Returns Call and RIS3: compliance with the P JAC Returns Call and RIS3 requirements, including verification of excluded activities (maximum 10 points);

(vi) Workplace preparedness: suitability of the research infrastructure available at UNI-CPS for the implementation of the Project (maximum 5 points);

(vii) Potential for the applicant's career development: potential impact of the Project on the applicant's career development and on the further development of UNI-CPS (maximum 5 points);

(viii) Budget: justification and specification of the budget in relation to the Return Grant, including consistency with the data contained in the KA3 calculator (maximum 5 points);

(ix) Gender aspects of research: gender aspects reflected in the research content (maximum 5 points).

Projects shall, upon receiving a score, be assigned to the categories specified in *Table 1: Categories for the classification of projects based on the scores awarded by reviewers*, using the arithmetic mean of the scores awarded by all four reviewers. Projects classified as "Not recommended for funding" on the basis of the project score shall be rejected and shall not proceed to further evaluation. In the case of a project classified as "Insufficient", the applicant may be invited to revise the project application in the areas identified as weaknesses. The revised project proposal may subsequently be submitted as a new Return Grant application.

Projects receiving a sufficient score shall be considered eligible and subsequently compared with other eligible projects. Projects with the highest scores shall be selected for implementation. In addition, a project must obtain at least 50% of the maximum possible points in each evaluation category in order to be eligible for funding.

Table 1 – Categories for the classification of projects based on the scores awarded by reviewers.

Average project score	Verbal assessment	Notes
0 – 50	Not recommended for funding	The project is rejected.
51 – 70	Insufficient	The project may be resubmitted after revision in accordance with the reviewers' comments.

71 – 85	Recommended for funding subject to the availability of funds	The project proceeds to the Evaluation Committee and is compared with other projects on the basis of the overall score. Subject to the availability of funds, the Evaluation Committee may decide on the implementation of the Project.
86 – 100	Recommended for funding	The project proceeds to the Evaluation Committee and is compared with other projects on the basis of the overall score.

6. Implementation and Progress of Return Grants

The Principal Investigator shall lead and organise the work of the research team in such a way as to ensure that the objectives of the Project are achieved. The Principal Investigator shall regularly consult the achieved results and subsequent steps with the Mentor in order to ensure the most effective implementation of the Project, fulfilment of the Project objectives, and prevention of potential problems that could complicate or delay their achievement.

6.1. Progress Report

The Principal Investigator is required to submit a Progress Report (see Appendix 9 – *Progress Report*) once every six months, no later than the 15th calendar day of the following month. The Progress Report shall include:

- Description of work activities carried out during the reporting period (max. 1 A4 page);
- Any interruption of work activities during the reporting period;
- Description of any changes during the implementation of the Project;
- Description of the involvement of the Mentor and the Supporting Expert Team during the reporting period (max. 1 A4 page);
- Work capacity of the Principal Investigator, Mentor and members of the Supporting Expert Team;
- Description of the training undertaken by the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant;

- Mobility report (where relevant; max. 1 A4 page);
- Assessment of progress in the implementation of the Project, progress towards outputs, and the expected dates of their achievement (max. 1 A4 page);
- List of achieved Project outputs, including both mandatory indicators and expected and planned activities (including a list of participation in professional workshops);
- Planned activities and objectives for the next reporting period (max. 1 A4 page);
- Data Management Plan (in accordance with Appendix 5 - *Data Management Plan*) financial reporting using the Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant (Appendix 10 – *Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant*), and any other relevant documents.

The Progress Report shall be submitted by email to navraty@cps.utb.cz.

6.2. Changes in the Implementation of a Return Grant

During the implementation of a Return Grant, changes may occur as a result of the current situation, particularly where their nature is unforeseeable. Within the implementation of a Project, two types of changes may be considered: (i) non-changeable parameters and (ii) substantial changes. Non-changeable parameters are aspects that may not be modified during the implementation of the Project and must be fulfilled throughout the implementation period in accordance with the approved project proposal.

The following are considered non-changeable parameters:

- Change of the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant[7];
    - Change of the objective and the main research focus of the Return Grant;
    - Increase in the total amount of financial resources allocated to the Return Grant;
    - Setting personnel costs at a level lower than that specified in the Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application or the Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant;

[7] If the Principal Investigator is no longer able to continue the implementation of the Project for justified reasons, it will be necessary to proceed with a "suspension of the Return Grant" or an "early termination of the Return Grant", which constitute changes falling within the category of substantial changes.

- Change of the version of the Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant (the calculator version approved at the time the Return Grant is awarded shall remain valid throughout the entire implementation period of the Return Grant).

The second type of changes are substantial changes, which include the following:

- Reduction in the value of a mandatory result to be achieved;
- Changes within the research team (where the number of members of the Supporting Expert Team must not fall below two and, at the same time, the average FTE must not decrease by more than 10%);
- Changes to the timetable of the Return Grant;
- Changes to the planned results and outputs of the Return Grant;
- Change of the Mentor: a request for a change of Mentor must include identification of the proposed new Mentor and prior approval by the Director of UNI and the Evaluation Committee;
- Suspension of the Return Grant [8];
- Early termination of the Return Grant [9];
- Change of the planned destination, planned host institution, or duration of the international mobility, subject to agreement with the Project Coordinator of the project "*Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break*" (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848).

The above non-changeable parameters defined in the project proposal are fixed, may not be modified, and are established prior to the commencement of the implementation

[8] Suspension of a Return Grant is only possible where the Principal Investigator is no longer able to continue the implementation of the Project. In the event of suspension of the Project, the Principal Investigator must ensure the successful completion of the Project no later than 30 June 2029. A Return Grant may be suspended only once during the implementation of the Project and for a maximum period of one year.

[9] Early termination is only possible where the Principal Investigator is no longer able to continue the implementation of the Project. Early termination of a Return Grant may take place only after the minimum implementation period of a Return Grant has elapsed, i.e. after at least 12 months, and the Principal Investigator must simultaneously submit a Final Report.

of the Return Grant. In the event of changes falling within the category of substantial changes, the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant shall submit a detailed and duly justified request for change to the administrator of the grant competition by email to navraty@cps.utb.cz. The subsequent approval or rejection of the request shall be decided by the Evaluation Committee.

7. Completion of the Project and Final Evaluation of the Return Grant

The Principal Investigator of the Return Grant is required to prepare a Final Report (see Appendix 11 – Final Report), which shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days after the completion of the Project and shall include the following sections:

- Description of work activities carried out during the reporting period (max. 1 A4 page);
- Any interruption of work activities during the reporting period;
- Changes within the Return Grant during the reporting period;
- Description of the involvement of the Mentor and the Supporting Expert Team during the reporting period (max. 1 A4 page);
- Description of the training undertaken by the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant;
- Mobility report for the reporting period (where relevant; max. 1 A4 page);
- Final summary of the Return Grant:
  - summary of the results and outputs achieved within the Project (max. 3 A4 pages)
  - summary of the results and outputs achieved within the Project;
  - list of participation in international conferences;
- Final financial reporting using the Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant together with an extract from the financial system covering the entire implementation period of the Return Grant;
- Further career plan following the implementation of the Return Grant (max. 2 A4 pages).

In the event of early termination of the Return Grant, the Principal Investigator is also required to submit a Final Report.

8. Sanctions

If the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant fails to fulfil the commitments undertaken in the Return Grant application, the procedures and compensation for damages stipulated by the internal regulations of Tomas Bata University in Zlín shall apply. In the event of failure to meet the required indicators within a Progress Report, or failure to submit a Progress Report or a Final Report, funding may be suspended.

9. Requirements for the Application of Open Science Principles

This section establishes the mandatory Open Science requirements for projects supported under the P JAC Returns Call. Compliance with Open Science practices is a mandatory condition for the funding of Return Grants.

One of the main requirements of Return Grants is compliance with the principle of Open Science, which includes, in particular, an open and transparent approach to scientific knowledge, data, methods and processes, as well as the consideration of gender aspects in the planned research.

9.1. Open Access to Scientific Publications

The Principal Investigator shall ensure:

- Open access to publication outputs of the Jimp type (articles in peer-reviewed journals), in particular peer-reviewed scholarly articles (article, review, letter). The outputs must report on the results of research supported by the Project;
- Immediate access without an embargo period through the deposit of either *the final publisher version* or the *accepted manuscript* in a trusted repository (e.g. Zenodo.org,

an institutional repository, or another repository specified in the Data Management Plan submitted as part of the project application);

- Availability of publications under the CC BY 4.0 licence (preferred option). If the publisher demonstrably does not permit the use of the CC BY 4.0 licence, the following licences may be used: CC BY-NC 4.0, CC BY-ND 4.0, or CC BY-NC-ND 4.0;
- The applicant shall not transfer proprietary rights to the publisher; only a non-exclusive licence may be granted in order to fulfil the Open Access requirements;
- Publication metadata must be publicly available, machine-readable and compliant with the FAIR principles;
- Communication with the Project Coordinator of the project "*Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break*" (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848) for the purpose of verifying compliance with Open Science requirements for each output of the Return Grant.

9.2. Research Data Management (FAIR Data), Storage and Accessibility

Within the area of research data management, the Principal Investigator shall:

- Prepare and regularly update a Data Management Plan (hereinafter also referred to as the "DMP") in accordance with the FAIR principles and the P JAC methodology. The DMP must be prepared as an appendix to the project application and subsequently updated as part of each Progress Report or, where applicable, the Final Report. The DMP template is available in the appendix (Appendix 5 – *Data Management Plan*);
- Deposit research data generated within the Project in a trusted repository (e.g. Zenodo, an institutional repository, or a disciplinary repository) as soon as possible after their creation and in accordance with the DMP;
- Make data publicly available in accordance with the principle "as open as possible, as closed as necessary", taking into account personal data protection, security restrictions, and intellectual property protection;

- Ensure long-term availability of data, including the use of persistent identifiers (e.g. DOI);
- Ensure the long-term availability of data, including the use of persistent identifiers (e.g. DOI);
- The Principal Investigator is recommended to use the template provided in Appendix 5 – Data Management Plan when preparing the DMP, or an appropriate software tool (e.g. Data Stewardship Wizard, DSW).

10. Publicity, Affiliation, Intellectual Property Protection

The results and outputs of the Return Grant shall be marked with the mandatory publicity tools in accordance with the P JAC publicity rules.23 When publishing in peer-reviewed journals, the Principal Investigator of the Return Grant shall always state the affiliation of the beneficiary, i.e. UNI-CPS, and include an acknowledgement of the P JAC Returns project, Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848, in all articles and conference contributions in a manner customary in the relevant field.

All information and communication activities must comply with the mandatory publicity requirements (more information on mandatory publicity, including logo blocks and their variants, is available on the P JAC website: https://opjak.cz/publicita/prehled-nastroju-povinne-publicity-u-projektu-op-jak/). Every document related to the implementation of the Project that is used to inform the public or target groups about the supported Project or part thereof, including any certificate of participation or other confirmation, must visibly display funding from the European Union (Figure 1 – Logo Blocks "Co-funded by the European Union").

Where permitted by the publisher of a peer-reviewed journal, publications shall include the relevant logo block and must also contain a statement that the Project was co-funded by the European Union within the project "*Support for Enhancing the Career Development*

of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break" (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848).

The Principal Investigator shall actively communicate the Project outputs on the UNI-CPS Return Grants website.

Research conducted during the implementation of Return Grants is expected to generate outputs subject to intellectual property protection. Such outputs shall be duly protected in cooperation with the Technology Transfer Centre of TBU, which provides support in securing such protection.

Jimp outputs and conference contributions must be approved by the Project Coordinator of the project "*Support for Enhancing the Career Development of High-Potential Researchers After a Career Break*" (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013848) prior to their submission.



Figure 1 - Illustrative logolinks "Co-funded by the European Union" (for the purposes of mandatory publicity, please use the original, uncompressed logolinks available for download at: https://opjak.cz/publicita/logolinky/).

11. Timeline

Applications for Return Grants may be submitted on a rolling basis by email (navraty@cps.utb.cz) from 15 June 2026. Each supported Project may commence no earlier than 1 September 2026 and must be completed no later than 30 June 2029.

12. Appendices to the Call Documentation

Appendix 1 – *Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries – Specific Part – Returns Call*

Appendix 2 – Confirmation of the Doctoral Thesis Topic (Confirmation by the Applicant's Supervisor and the Applicant for a UNI Return Grant, where the applicant is a doctoral student, regarding a possible overlap between the topic of the Return Grant and the doctoral thesis topic)

Appendix 3 – Declaration of Honour on Non-Participation in Another Return Grant (Declaration of Honour by an Applicant for a Return Grant Regarding the Absence of Double Funding and Participation in Another Return Grant)

Appendix 4 – Statutory Declaration of the Project Investigator (Statutory Declaration and Authorization by the Rector for the Project Investigator

Appendix 5 – Data Management Plan

Appendix 6 – Calculator Activity 3_Return Grant Application

Appendix 7 – Returns_RIS3

Appendix 8 – Project Application Template

Appendix 9 – Progress Report

Appendix 10 – Calculator Activity 3_Implementation of a Return Grant

Appendix 11 – Final Report