

# EMBO Courses & Workshops Programme

## Course committee guidelines 2019

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**Application deadlines:**

1 March and 1 August annually

**EMBC Member States:** Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and United Kingdom

**EMBC Associate Member States (B):** India, Singapore

**Countries / territories covered by a co-operation agreement (C):** Chile, Taiwan

**Countries / territories eligible for co-funding by EMBO and The Company of Biologists (D):** Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Republic of Korea

**EMBO subject areas:** Cell Cycle, Cell & Tissue Architecture, Cellular Metabolism, Chromatin & Transcription, Development, Differentiation & Death, Evolution & Ecology, Genome Stability & Dynamics, Genomic & Computational Biology, Immunology, Membranes & Transport, Microbiology, Virology & Pathogens, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, Plant Biology, Proteins & Biochemistry, RNA, Signal Transduction, Structural Biology & Biophysics, Systems Biology

**Contact:** [courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org)

**EMBO Course Committee 2019:**

Anne-Claude Gavin (DE)  
Christian Lehner (CH) (Chair)  
Zoi Lygerou (GR)  
Klaus-Armin Nave (DE)  
Catherine Rabouille (NL)  
Peter Sebo (CZ)  
Jens Stougaard (DK)  
Jernej Ule (UK)  
Alfonso Valencia (ES)  
Núria Verdaguer (ES)

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# EMBO Courses and Workshops Programme

EMBO's mission is to provide training for researchers in Europe and beyond in the area of the life sciences. Since the foundation of EMBO over 50 years ago, EMBO Courses and Workshops have been a core programme of EMBO and has supported meetings organised by scientific experts.

EMBO is the largest provider of support for scientific meetings in the area of the life sciences in Europe. EMBO Courses & Workshops funds approximately 80 events that attract more than 9,000 participants every year.

EMBO Practical Courses promote the transfer of new methods and emerging techniques to a large number of laboratories. The primary objective is to enable participating students to implement novel techniques in their home laboratories. Experts in the research area teach the latest techniques to PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

EMBO Workshops bring scientists together to present and discuss their latest findings. PhD students and postdoctoral researchers present their results in poster sessions and short talks and have the opportunity to meet and discuss with leaders in their fields.

The meetings are proposed by scientists and selected by the EMBO Course Committee. This ensures that the latest developments can be reflected in the EMBO programme. Applications to organise an EMBO event can be submitted twice annually on 1 March and 1 August in the calendar year before the event is scheduled to take place.

EMBO support ensures low registration fees, which enables scientists from all regions to participate and access the latest scientific advances.

EMBO provides funding of maximally €33,500 of core funding. An additional €4,500 will automatically be allocated to fund travel and childcare grants to participants. This additional funding can be used as follows: €1,500 are provided for general travel grants and €2,000 for travel grants for scientists of any nationality working in Chile, India, Singapore or Taiwan to participate in meetings in regular EMBC Member States (A – see list on first page).

For events taking place outside Europe (B, C and D – see list on first page), EMBO provides €1,500 for general travel grants and €2,000 for travel grants for participants of any nationality working in EMBC Member States (A – see list on first page).

A further €1,000 are provided to cover additional childcare costs incurred by participants or speakers when participating at any EMBO-funded meeting. Eligible costs include fees for a baby-sitter or child-care facility, travel costs for a caregiver, or travel costs for taking the child to the meeting etc.

In addition organisers can ask for support of an EMBO YIP lecture, EMBO Science Policy lecture and an EMBO Women in Science lecture.

EMBO will provide advertisement of the event, the creation of a website (including an online registration and abstract submission system) and a poster to all organisers.

## Terms of reference

EMBO Committees act in an advisory role to EMBO Council. The authority to make decisions on the funding of applications to the EMBO Courses and Workshops Programme has been delegated by EMBO Council to the EMBO Course Committee.

The Course Committee comprises 10 EMBO Members with different areas of scientific expertise. Committee members normally serve a four-year term. The Course Committee suggests replacements for outgoing

committee members. The suggested names are submitted to EMBO Council for appointment. New committee members will be invited by the EMBO Office.

The committee selects a chair (normally a current member of the committee with some experience on this committee) and the proposed name is brought to EMBO Council for appointment. The chair serves a term of three years in addition to the number of years he/she has already served on the committee. When a chair finishes his/her term, the committee members will be asked by written procedure to propose a new chairperson. Only proposals received by written procedure prior to the committee meeting can be voted upon.

The Course Committee meets twice per year to evaluate proposals.

The Chair of the Committee is also a member of the EMBO/EMBL Symposia Committee to ensure consistency and interaction between these two EMBO-funded activities. The Course Committee members are not required to review any proposals for this activity.

All travel and accommodation expenses incurred by the committee members when attending committee meetings are covered by EMBO.

## List of current Course Committee members (2019 – 1<sup>st</sup> period)

Anne-Claude Gavin (DE)  
Christian Lehner (CH) (Chair)  
Zoi Lygerou (GR)  
Klaus-Armin Nave (DE)  
Catherine Rabouille (NL)  
Peter Sebo (CZ)  
Jens Stougaard (DK)  
Jernej Ule (UK)  
Alfonso Valencia (ES)  
Núria Verdaguer (ES)

For contact details, scientific keywords and terms of service of the committee members, see Annex II.

## Tasks of the Course Committee

Course Committee members are asked to review the applications to the EMBO Courses and Workshops Programme, which are received twice annually, and to select the best applications for funding. These include applications for EMBO Practical Courses, EMBO Workshops, India I EMBO Symposia, EMBO I FEBS Lecture Courses and EMBO Global Exchange Lecture Courses. In addition, EMBO receives requests for funding of Keynote Lectures to be given by EMBO Members at non-EMBO funded meetings.

If necessary, the EMBO Course Committee may want to solicit applications on topics that are currently not well covered by the programme.

Committee members receive meeting proposals for evaluation approximately one month prior to the committee meetings. On average EMBO receives 170 applications and funds approximately 80 events annually, which translates to approximately 17 applications needing to be evaluated by each committee member prior to each committee meeting. The committee members will submit their evaluations to EMBO prior to the meeting. Applications are ranked and discussed during the meeting. Final decisions on the funding of applications are made by the committee during the meeting.

Keynote Lecture applications are sent to the committee chair periodically for evaluation.

## EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

Committee Members are asked to indicate any conflict of interest. Please take note of EMBO's Conflict of Interest Policy in Annex II.

The following situations may arise for Course Committee Members:

Situation	Level of conflict	Consequence
Being an organiser	Very high	Excluded from review process*
Being an advisor to the applicant for this application	High	Excluded from review process*
Being an active collaborator of the applicant or having collaborated during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Being a partner of the organiser	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a PhD or postdoctoral/training relationship now or during the past five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Working in same institution	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a financial interest in the application	High	Excluded from review process*
Being a previous organiser for the same series of meetings	High	Excluded from review process*
Being an invited speaker in the proposal	Medium	Partially excluded from review process**

\*Cannot be assigned as one of the two main reviewers of the proposal. Cannot participate in the discussions related to this particular application (needs to leave the room while the discussion takes place).

\*\* Cannot be assigned as one of the two main reviewers of the proposal, but can advise during the discussions.

If you have any questions about a potential conflict of interest, please contact the EMBO Office ([courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org)).

## Confidentiality

Strict confidentiality is expected regarding all applications. Information received during the review process and the committee meeting should not be relayed to third parties.

All proposals are confidential until approval by the EMBO Course Committee and acceptance of funding conditions by the organiser, when the meeting is added to the online calendar of events: <http://www.embo.org/events/calendar.html>

## Selection and evaluation procedure

### Selection procedure

#### OVERVIEW

Applications are accepted biannually for Courses & Workshops activities and accepted annually for joint EMBO | FEBS Lecture Courses. Each application is reviewed by at least two members of the EMBO Course Committee and the final decision is made by the entire committee at the biannual Course Committee meetings. The Course Committee meets in April/May and September/October to make decisions on the applications received at the 1 March and 1 August deadlines respectively.

Keynote Lecture applications are assessed three times per year, with deadlines 1 February, 1 June and 1 October. Each application is reviewed in depth by the Chair of the EMBO Course Committee. Applicants are notified of the outcome within six weeks of the deadline.

Applications and reviews are handled via an online system.

Key dates for 2019 can be found in Annex I

#### Eligibility criteria

Applications must meet the following criteria to be accepted:

- Applications for Courses and Workshops must cover a topic from the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas on first page).
- Scientists from anywhere in the world are eligible to apply, independent of their nationality.
- While organisers can be based anywhere, practical courses and workshops must take place in one of the following:
  - A. EMBC Member State
  - B. EMBC Associate Member State
  - C. Country or territory covered by a co-operation agreement
  - D. Country or territory eligible for co-funding by EMBO and The Company of Biologists
- Global Exchange Lecture Courses can only take place outside Europe (B, C or D - see list on first page).
- If you wish to organise a meeting in a country that is not listed, please contact the EMBO office.

**Please note:** For repeating practical courses and workshops a new application is required for each individual meeting within a series. Each application for funding of a meeting within a series will be evaluated competitively.

### Evaluation procedure

#### APPLICATION FORMS

The application contains:

- A list of organisers, including their prior experience in organising scientific meetings
- Title, dates and location of the event
- Reasons why it is timely and important to cover this topic
- A list of competing or similar events
- A list of speakers

- A draft programme including planned networking activities
- A draft budget

## **ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

Applications are submitted via the EMBO online application system. Each application is assigned to two committee members.

In order to review the applications, committee members log in at: <http://applications.embo.org/01/index.php> (this link will be personalized for each committee member). On each reviewer's homepage will be a list of all applications to be reviewed by that reviewer, with a link to view the application and to fill in the online evaluation form.

The 'Downloads' section on the left of the reviewer's homepage contains PDF versions of the proposal and any supplementary information that is relevant to its evaluation (usually previous proposals and evaluations). The PDF files will not open in a browser window but will be downloaded to your computer to facilitate offline viewing. (To avoid technical problems, please ensure that you only have a single browser window per form open at any given time).

In the 'Evaluation' section, please fill the appropriate evaluation form for each application. Each main section of the evaluation form allows you to grade from 1 (lowest) to 7 (best). This is to distinguish the different aspects of the proposal. The final grade (also ranging from 1 to 7) is not necessarily meant to be an arithmetical average of all subsection grades, but represents the overall grade from the reviewer taking into consideration all aspects.

Press the 'Save Progress' button on the left at any time to store the current content of the form. The form will also save content changes automatically at regular intervals. You may return to your stored form and revise its content at any time before the deadline.

When you are ready for the final submission, check the 'Form complete' box on the left and click on 'Submit'. An automated acknowledgement email will be sent to you after completion of each individual report.

Once your report has been submitted as 'complete', you will no longer be able to modify it. However, a printable summary of the form content will be displayed for your reference upon final submission and will stay available on your home page afterwards, together with a link to the PDF file of the proposal.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA (EMBO Workshops and Lecture Courses)**

### **A. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME**

Organisers should indicate a provisional timetable, session titles with brief explanations of the subjects covered and how they fit together, confirmed and unconfirmed speakers for each session and the reason for their selection.

The following criteria shall be taken into consideration when evaluating an application:

- **Originality of the proposed topic**

There should be convincing scientific justification that the event serves an active and evolving community; topics should be timely and preferably not in an area where there is already an overabundance of meetings. If the topic is similar to an on-going series of events funded by EMBO, the unique focus of the proposed meeting should be clearly indicated.

- **Structure of the programme**

The programme should be sufficiently detailed, listing session themes and speakers and should cover the topic(s) in sufficient depth and breadth, also allowing time for questions and discussions.

- **Coverage of the topic by the selected speakers**

There should be enough speakers to cover the topic in sufficient depth but without making the programme overly dense. Slots should be available for talks selected from abstracts.

- **Quality of the speakers list and confirmed speakers**

The list of speakers should balance both early-stage and established investigators/group leaders, the majority of speakers should be confirmed.

- **Geographical diversity and gender balance in the list of speakers**

There should be a minimum of 30% of the underrepresented sex when selecting speakers (if there is a lower proportion justification must be provided). In addition, 50% of the speakers should be based in EMBC Member States/Europe or in Associate EMBC Member States or from countries and territories covered by a co-operation agreement. Significant bias towards a given country/region should be avoided.

- **Previous feedback (*only if the event is a repeat of an EMBO event or if organisers have been involved in organising other EMBO events in the past*)**

Feedback from the previous meeting will be available if the meeting took place more than six months before the deadline for application. If there was any negative feedback the attempts to rectify these issues in the current application should be specified. See annex III for an overview of the range of feedback received.

- **Recurrence of speakers (*only if the event is a repeat of an EMBO event*)**

No more than 50% of the speakers should have spoken at the previous event in the series.

## **B. NETWORKING**

- **Dedicated time for discussion and interactions**

Enough time should be planned for discussion and there should be sessions that promote exchanges between the participants. Meals should be organised for all participants in order to encourage interaction between participants (EMBO will not fund a separate "speakers' dinner" during the meeting); participants and speakers should be accommodated in the same location/limited number of locations. Other attempts to promote interaction amongst attendees are a plus.

- **Schedule and location of the poster sessions**

Poster sessions should be held at a time that encourages maximal attendance, ideally not during lunch or coffee breaks, with no activities taking place in parallel, and should be held in a room with sufficient space, for at least 90 minutes. At least two poster sessions are expected for a meeting with more than 150 participants.

## **C. ORGANISING COMMITTEE AND MEETING LOCATION**

- **Diversity within the organising committee**

Co-organisers should be from more than one institute and if possible from several countries.

- **Rotation of organisers (*only if the event is a repeat of an EMBO event*)**

The organising committee should rotate for repeat EMBO events, with no one scientific organiser involved with organising three consecutive conferences or workshops (this rule does not apply for EMBO Practical Courses or EMBO Global Exchange Lecture Courses). The committee is free to consider exceptions to this rule.

- **Location of the event**

The organising committee is advised to select a venue that is easy to reach from an international airport.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA (EMBO Practical Courses)**

EMBO Practical Courses promote the transfer of new methods and emerging techniques. The programme of a practical course should cover both theory and practice with the aim to enable participants to implement novel

techniques in their home laboratories. Approximately 20 participants should be accepted. Participants are generally early-stage postdoctoral researchers and advanced PhD students.

The following criteria shall be taken into consideration when evaluating an application:

**A. TOPIC**

• **Relevance**

The topic should be suitable to EMBO as well as cutting-edge and relevant to the scientific community. Repeat meetings may well fulfill these criteria.

• **Selection of the techniques**

The course should not focus on a single (proprietary) technique, but should present a range of relevant techniques and instruments.

• **Overlap with similar courses**

The overlap with similar courses should be minimal.

• **Previous feedback (*only if the event is a repeat of an EMBO event*)**

Feedback from the previous meeting will be available if the meeting took place more than six months before the deadline for application. If there was any negative feedback the attempts to rectify these issues in the current application should be specified. See annex III for an overview of the range of feedback received.

**B. INSTRUCTORS**

The instructors should be experts in the topic. 30% of the speakers should be from the underrepresented sex.

**C. PROGRAMME/SCHEDULE**

The time dedicated to lectures, practical work and discussions should be appropriate to the topic, ideally practical sessions should comprise at least 40% of the programme. Again, depending on the topic and techniques a practical course may be between three and ten days long. Organisers are advised to allow time for networking (joint meals, coffee breaks and group discussions) as well as give participants the opportunity to present their research. If possible, participants should have the opportunity to bring their own samples/problems.

**D. INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCATION**

The equipment and materials should be state-of-the-art and appropriate to the topic. Instructors and participants should be housed together if possible.

**COMMITTEE MEETING**

The committee meeting takes place at the EMBO office in Heidelberg.

Generally, only a subset of the applications will be discussed in detail, depending on the total score received (the total score is the sum of the final scores from both reviewers):

- If a given application achieves a total score of 12 or higher, the application will be considered as accepted for funding.
- Applications that score 7 or less will be considered as rejected, unless a committee member requests discussion of the proposal.
- All proposals that received total scores between 8 to 11 (inclusive) are discussed during the meeting.

The list of proposals and their scores will be sent to the committee one week prior to the meeting. The committee chair, prior to the committee meeting, screens all applications to be discussed and applications that received highly uneven scores.

Committee members will be given the opportunity to discuss any of the applications considered accepted or rejected based on the scores received (as described above) if they do not agree with the decision or if they wish that the organisers be informed of specific details regarding the application.

The written reports and the conclusions of the discussions during the committee meeting will serve to guide the feedback given to unsuccessful applicants.