Methodology for Applicants and Researchers in the Returns Programme

Name of the project: Returns at the CU

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Content

1	Conditions of the call for proposals	3
2	Return grant application	3
2.1	Applicant/principal investigator	3
2.2	Supportive professional team	4
2.3	Mentor	5
2.3.1	Mentor selection procedure	5
2.4	Applicant's obligations within the project proposal	5
2.5	Duration of implementation of return grants	6
2.6	Financial support for care provider	6
2.7	International mobility of the principal investigator of a return grant	б
2.8	Education of the principal investigator of a return grant	7
2.9	Eligibility of financial parameters of a return grant	7
2.10	Results and outputs of return grants	7
2.11	Gender in the research content	8
2.12	Compliance with the national RIS3 strategy	9
3	Completion of a return grant application	9
3.1	Information section	9
3.2	Research team section	10
3.2.1	Information on the applicant/principal investigator	10
3.2.2	Information on the supportive professional team (where relevant)	10
3.2.3	Information on the mentor	10
3.3	Annexes section	10
3.3.1	Compulsory annexes	10
3.3.2	Information filled in by the applicant in the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application	า 11
3.4	Advice and recommendations	11
4	Evaluation of return grant applications	12
4.1	Evaluation process	12
4.1.1	Round 1 of the evaluation process: Evaluation of formal aspects and admissibility	12
4.1.2	Round 2 of the evaluation process: Evaluation of the subject matter	12
5	Implementation of return grants	13
5.1	Agreement on Allocation of Financial Means	13
5.2	Interim and final cost report	14
5.3	Requirements related to the application of the principles of open science	15
5.4	Data Management Plan	17
5.5	Changes during the implementation of return grants	17
5.5.1	Prohibited changes during the implementation of a return grant	17





5.5.2	Permitted changes during the implementation of a return grant	17
5.6	Interim Activity Report	18
5.6.1	Content of Interim Activity Report	18
5.7	Documenting unit costs reported on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return implementation	_
5.7.1	Return grant – main researcher	19
5.7.2	Supportive professional team for the implementation of a return grant	19
5.7.3	Financial support for the care provider for a child or a close person	19
5.7.4	Mobility of the principal investigator of a return grant (stays abroad)	19
5.7.5	Educational activities of the principal investigator of a return grant	20
5.8	Completion of the implementation and final evaluation of a return grant	20
5.8.1	Content of the Final Report ("FR")	20
5.8.2	Evaluation and approval of the FR	20
6	Publicity, affiliation, intellectual property (IP) protection	20
7	Conditions and penalties for a breach of obligations	21
7.1	Penalty for failure to submit an Interim Activity Report and the Final Activity Report	21
7.2	Penalty for failure to achieve the results and outputs agreed in the return grant appli	
8	Application period	22
9	Annexes	22





1 Conditions of the call for proposals

- An application for a return grant ("application") is submitted to the Charles University ("University") via the information system "IS Věda".
- The application may be submitted from 1 Oct 2025 12 p.m. to 3 Nov 2025 12:00 p.m.
- The application is submitted by the applicant (principal investigator) who is affiliated to a faculty or a higher education institute where the applicant is enrolled for doctoral study or employed at the time of the submission of the application.
- If the principal investigator is a student of a doctoral study programme, the topic of the project may not be identical to the topic of the researcher's dissertation, but the outputs of the project may be used in the dissertation.
- The principal investigator must reserve a work capacity for the project equivalent to an FTE of 0.50 to 1.00.
- The principal investigator may engage other employees (supportive professional team) who
 will be involved in the implementation of the return grant under the principal investigator's
 supervision.
- The supportive professional team may consist of up to four researchers, members of technical staff, or other specialists whose total FTEs do not exceed 2.00 rounded to two decimal points. Their participation is planned for the entire duration of the project.
- Neither the principal investigator nor the members of the supportive professional team may participate in multiple return grants or be included in more than one project proposal.
- The principal investigator must have a mentor who provides guidance in terms of methodology and expert support and who may help with planning the individual steps in the implementation of the project. The mentor's involvement may not exceed 0.20 FTE. The mentor may not be a researcher or the head of the project and he/she is not paid from the return grant.
- After the admission of the applications is closed, an evaluation process follows, which will be completed no later than on 31 Jan 2026.
- The implementation of all projects may commence no sooner than 1 Feb 2026 and be completed no later than on 31 Jan 2029.

2 Return grant application

2.1 Applicant/principal investigator

- An applicant for a return grant must be a student of a doctoral study programme or a holder of a Ph.D. degree (or an equivalent thereof) on the date of the submission of the application and, at the same time, he/she must be currently taking a career break (which the applicant proves with a confirmation from the competent authority or a similar document), or the period since the end of the career break until the date of the submission of the return grant application has not exceeded 12 months (the applicant provides a confirmation from the competent authority proving that the period since the end of the career break has not exceeded 12 months on the date of the submission of the return grant application).
- The grant-related work activities of the principal investigator must correspond to an FTE of 0.50 to 1.00 per month for the duration of the return grant.
- If the principal investigator is a student of a doctoral study programme, the topic of the project is not allowed to be identical to the topic of the researcher's dissertation, but the outputs of the project may be used in the dissertation.
- The applicant is allowed to be involved in only one return grant at the University.

Career break means a period of a minimum of 180 calendar days during which the researcher (applicant for a return grant) could not perform science and research activities ("S&R activities") to the full extent due to





maternity or parental leave, long-term care, or long-term sickness. The researcher may perform S&R activities during his/her career break within his/her employment at the University which corresponds to a maximum FTE of 0.3 per month (i.e., the FTE at the given institution in the area of S&R) on average for the months in which this type of work was performed. At the same time, the researcher's FTE in the area of S&R may not exceed 0.5 in any month during the career break. The month in which the researcher starts working in the area of S&R at the University during his/her career break is included for the purposes of calculating the FTE from the date on which the researcher starts performing this type of work. The month in which the researcher stops working in the area of S&R at the University is included in the calculation from the date on which he/she stops performing this type of work. A career break may be interrupted for a period during which the personal obstacle on the part of the researcher is not temporarily relevant. The duration of the career breaks immediately preceding and following the interruption are added up as a total provided that the interruptions of the career break do not exceed a total of 30 calendar days. The minimum duration of a career break of 180 days is extended by the number of the calendar days of the interruption thereof (i.e., if a career break is interrupted for 30 calendar days, the minimum duration of the career break, including all interruptions, must be 210 days).

For the purposes of this call, **researcher** means an employee who develops new knowledge or expands existing knowledge, usually by managing and/or performing activities which include conceiving or developing new knowledge, processes, methods, and systems, and who applies scientific concepts and theories. For the purposes of this call, researchers mean University employees who have been awarded at least a master's degree and are engaged in science and research activities.

There are two categories of researchers in return grant applications: junior researcher (equivalent to the position of junior main researcher based on the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application) and senior researcher (equivalent to the position of senior main researcher based on the document Calculator Activity 3_return grant application):

- Junior researcher means a researcher who is a student of a doctoral study programme or who was awarded a Ph.D. degree or an equivalent thereof (ISCED level 8) no longer than 7 years ago (from the date of the defence of the dissertation). This period is extended by the period of maternity and parental leave, long-term sickness (exceeding 90 days), care for a family member (exceeding 90 days), pre-certification preparation, and military service. An applicant for a return grant must highlight these facts in his/her CV and prove them with the relevant documents (confirmation of maternity/parental leave, etc.). The 7-year period applies to the date of the submission of the return grant application.
- Senior researcher means a researcher who was awarded a Ph.D. degree or an equivalent thereof (ISCED level 8) more than 7 years ago (from the date of the defence of the dissertation). This period is extended by the period of maternity and parental leave, long-term sickness (exceeding 90 days), care for a family member (exceeding 90 days), pre-certification preparation, and military service. An applicant for a return grant must highlight these facts in his/her CV and prove them with the relevant documents (confirmation of maternity/parental leave, etc.). The 7-year period applies to the date of the submission of the return grant application.

2.2 Supportive professional team

- The supportive professional team consists of a **maximum of 4 persons** (excluding the principal investigator).
- The **total FTEs of the members of the supportive professional team** may not exceed **2.00**. The FTE of each individual member of the supportive professional team must correspond to the job description and the general character of the return grant.
- The creation of a **supportive professional team is not compulsory**, but bonus points are awarded for such team in the evaluation of a return grant application.

Members of the supportive professional team (who are involved in the return grant under the supervision of the principal investigator but who are not restarting their careers after a career break) **may include**:

• Students of a doctoral study programme (student of a doctoral study programme means a person enrolled in part-time or full-time study in a doctoral study programme at a higher education institution),





- Members of technical staff (for the purposes of this call, member of technical staff means an
 employee who ensures professional service/operation of the infrastructure used, or other positions for
 specialists involved in the return grant whose job description within the implementation of the return
 grant does not include research. Members of technical staff do not include administrative staff and
 researchers),
- Researchers (for the purposes of this call, researcher means an employee who develops new knowledge or expands existing knowledge, usually by managing and/or performing activities which include conceiving or developing new knowledge, processes, methods, and systems, and who applies scientific concepts and theories. For the purposes of this call, researchers mean University employees who have been awarded at least a master's degree and are engaged in S&R activities.

2.3 Mentor

- The involvement of a mentor is compulsory for all principal investigator of return grants for the entire duration of the project. The mentor's maximum work capacity for his/her involvement in the project corresponds to an FTE of 0.20.
- The minimum qualification requirements for a mentor are as follows: senior researcher (who was awarded a Ph.D. degree or an equivalent thereof more than 7 years ago) with adequate practise in the field of the return grant.
- The mentor is not a member of the team or the head of the project, but he/she assists the principal investigator for a smoother transition back into the research process.
- The mentor is not financed from the return grant.
- The mentor evaluates the achievement of the objectives of the project in the final report.

2.3.1 Mentor selection procedure

- 1. The mentor is selected by the applicant, who submits the name of the mentor (said mentor having agreed to mentor the principal investigator for the implementation of the return grant) to the Faculty coordinator.
- 2. The Faculty coordinator fills in the mentor's name in the "Statement by the Dean of the Faculty" form.
- 3. The applicant provides the mentor's name in the return grant application. The mentor receives a notification in which he/she confirms his/her participation and provides other information required in the application (CV, specialisation, etc.). If the mentor is not an University employee, the applicant then provides the required information regarding the mentor in IS Věda and uploads the mentor's confirmation as an annex (the form is available in the annex hereto or for download in IS Věda).
- 4. The faculty approves the principal investigator's mentor within the implementation of the mentoring system at the University (in the confirmation of the Statement by the Dean of the Faculty).

2.4 Applicant's obligations within the project proposal

- 1. Determine his/her work capacity for the project;
- 2. Agree with the department at which the project will be implemented;
- 3. Assemble the supportive professional team (optional);
- 4. Agree with the members of the supportive professional team on their involvement in the project and their work capacity for the project (where relevant);
- 5. Choose a mentor whom the applicant approaches regarding the mentor's involvement in the return grant;
- 6. Ensure that the "Statement by the Dean of the Faculty" form is completed and confirmed and submit the form to the Faculty coordinator (in particular, the mentor's name and department);





- 7. Define the topic and research objective of the project, the methods used to achieve that objective, the expected outputs, and the duration of the project, which the applicant may discuss with the selected mentor and the supportive professional team;
- 8. Determine the place (destination and foreign institution) and duration of his/her international mobility (optional);
- 9. Choose his/her own educational activities (optional);
- 10. Decide whether he/she wants to apply for financial support for a care provider for a child or a close person (and choose the number of months of the support);
- 11. Fill in information in the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application;
- 12. Upload the project proposal and the required annexes in IS Věda;
- 13. Submit the project application no later than on 3 Nov 2025 by 12 p.m. IS Věda sends a notification confirming that the application has been submitted successfully. The application may be modified or completed during the period for the submission of applications. However, if the application is not submitted within the deadline for the submission of applications, it is not evaluated in the call.

2.5 Duration of implementation of return grants

The duration of the implementation of a return grant is 2 to 3 years (in whole calendar months).

2.6 Financial support for care provider

- The purpose of the support is to provide a contribution to the expected costs incurred by the principal investigator of a return grant in relation to the personal care for a child who is not yet obliged to attend preschool (has not reached the age of 5 by the end of August of the calendar year in which the child becomes obliged to attend preschool in accordance with the Schools Act) or in relation to long-term care for a close person¹ who has long-term health issues², specifically during the period in which the principal investigator will implement the return grant and cannot take care of the child or close person.
- The principal investigator becomes entitled to the financial support in each, even incomplete, calendar month of the implementation of the return grant in which the above condition of caring for a child or a close person is met.
- The unit cost is the costs of the financial support for the care provider for a child or a close person per calendar month.
- The financial support is paid as a part of the wage and is regulated by analogy to minimum labour costs.

2.7 International mobility of the principal investigator of a return grant

- The principal investigator is expected to improve his/her qualifications and specialised knowledge, transfer know-how to the Czech research organisation, and network with experts from foreign departments. The long-term aim is the internationalisation of research.
- Mobility contributes to a quicker restart after a career break.
- The subject-matter must have a logical relationship to the implemented research.
- The minimum duration of the international mobility is at least 1 month. The maximum duration of the international mobility is 6 months. The mobility may be divided into two parts the duration of which does not exceed a total of 6 months.
- It is not compulsory but is recommended. If it is included in the application, the applicant must participate in the mobility.

² Under Section 3 (c) of Act No. 108/2006 Sb., to regulate social service, as amended.





¹ Under Section 22 (1) of the Civil Code.

- The principal investigator travels to a foreign organisation on the basis of, for example, a memorandum, letter of invitation, or other similar document agreed between the Czech and the foreign research organisation.
- The principal investigator must write a mobility report after the end of the mobility.
- The unit cost is only eligible if the principal investigator works for at least 4 hours per working day.
- The unit cost is calculated to cover the principal investigator's travel allowances (travel to the destination, local travel costs, accommodation, meal allowance + allowance for personal needs, costs of consumable materials related to practical training, etc.).
- The principal investigator's labour costs are not included in this unit cost. The labour costs of the principal investigator are paid from the unit cost "Return grant main researcher".

2.8 Education of the principal investigator of a return grant

- The aim of this activity is to provide the necessary education to the principal investigator to further develop his/her competences.
- It includes, in particular, specialised education, but also education in the area of team management, preparation of a grant application, managerial skills, etc.
- The principal investigator may attend both accredited and non-accredited courses and educational programmes, internal and external courses, and courses held in person or remotely (online synchronous courses).
- Specialised education courses may be held outside the Czech Republic.
- Soft skills courses may be held only in the Czech Republic.
- Education is optional, but if it is included in the project application, the principal investigator must attend the courses listed.

2.9 Eligibility of financial parameters of a return grant

The costs of a return grant are unit costs based on the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application. The principal unit activity is "Return grant – main researcher (research)". **Additional unit activities** may be added to the principal unit activity:

- Supportive professional team for the implementation of a return grant;
- Financial support for the care provider for a child or a close person;
- International mobility of the principal investigator of a return grant (stays abroad);
- Educational activities of the principal investigator of a return grant.

Additional unit activities may not be carried out independently, i.e., without the principal investigator.

Important notice:

The principal investigator of a return grant may not receive support from other sources for the same activities during the implementation of a return grant. Specifically, the principal investigator may not hold the position of a principal investigator in a different grant in the same area (e.g., specific university research, return grants of the Czech Science Foundation, etc.) or participate in a mobility with the same goal funded from a different source. The costs of a return grant under this call may not be combined with the support provided for return grants funded by the Czech Science Foundation.

The financial means for the implementation of a return grant are provided by the University. The faculty or the higher education institute contributes 10% from its own sources to the financing for the project budget. Members of the research team may be involved in the project only on the basis of an employment relationship (employment contract or an agreement to perform work (DPČ)).

2.10 Results and outputs of return grants

The objectives and planned outputs of the project must be achieved.





Recommended types of outputs – achieved research results, academic articles or publications which have been published, or whose peer-review has been completed and which have been recommended for publication, proposed methods and methodology, active participation in specialised conferences (e.g., in the form of a poster), improvement of communication and language skills during an internship, training in the use of a new device or method which can be used in further scholarly activities, certificates of completed educational courses and training, etc.

Recommendations for planning outputs – if the planned outputs are not achieved, the result is evaluated as not accomplished and the financial means allocated to the principal investigator for the last month of the implementation are deducted (these means are not eligible). It is therefore important to consider the outputs and the stage of their completion defined in the application.

2.11 Gender in the research content

The applicant for a return grant (i.e., the principal investigator) must take into account gender in the research content.

Gender need not necessarily be reflected in each project³, but considering the potential physical differences (sex) or potential differences in the experience, perspectives, and needs of women and men (gender) always serves a purpose in the following cases:

- The objects of the research are people: surveys of people, data analysis related to people, research involving human tissue, etc.
- The users of the research results or innovations are people: consumers, patients, and other users:
- The results may have an effect on people: research or innovations which affect the environment, research of animals or their tissue, the results of which may later be extrapolated to humans, etc.

The evaluation of the **relevance of the gender dimension** in the research should always focus on whether the anatomical or physiological differences between men and women – for example, the typically different size of the body and certain body parts, manual handling strength, range of motion, voice pitch, thermal perception, differences in the research of human or animal tissue, etc. – may play a role in the area being studied or in the development of products.

In order to evaluate the **relevance of the gender dimension** in the return grant, it is necessary to consider any potential differences in the needs or perspectives of men and women (or groups thereof) within the target group of the project. It is also advised to look into whether men and women might have different expectations from the functions of the product or services being developed (application, software, methodology, etc.), different needs for the content, or different expectations for the design of the technology or other research products. It is also recommended to consider the risk of a specific setting of the processes or services resulting in the exclusion of certain groups from the use of the solution offered and the benefits thereof.

If the principal investigator finds that sex or gender might play a role in the area studied, this dimension must be taken into account in the research aim and design and in the description of the intended application. Selected examples of the relevance of sex and gender in individual fields of study:4

- Medical sciences: In this area, sex and gender should be considered, e.g., in relation to different risk factors, biological mechanisms, causes of diseases, clinical symptoms, consequences, and different procedures for the treatment of diseases or disorders.
- Food industry, agriculture, and biotechnology: Sex and gender might have an effect in, e.g., manufacturing processes, different use of agricultural products (food and non-food products),

⁴ The relevance of gender in research is described in detail in this publication: https://tacr.gov.cz/wp-content/uploads/documents/2019/10/10/1570715233_P%C5%99%C3%ADloha%20%C4%8D.%201%20-%20P%C5%99%C3%ADru%C4%8Dka%20pro%20vyhodnocen%C3%AD%20genderov%C3%A9%20dimenze%20v%20obsahu%20v%C3%BDzkumu.pdf





³ An analysis of cases in which it is relevant to reflect the gender dimension in the research content may be performed on the basis of this publication: https://genderaveda.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Gender-ve-v%C3%BDzkumu-p%C5%99%C3%ADru%C4%8Dka upraven%C3%A1-verze pdf.pdf

in the roles performed, responsibilities and ownership, production sustainability, and in the management of sources and processes.

- Nanotechnology, new materials, and production technologies: The gender dimension comes into play, in particular, in relation to the interdisciplinary effects, e.g., in the areas of the environment, food industry, agriculture, energy sector, information and communication technologies, etc. Nanoparticles may have a different effect on female and male bodies.
- **Energy sector:** In this area, gender aspects should be taken into consideration, e.g., in the approach to energy technologies, reflection on technology-related risks, energy needs, and the use of energy.
- **Environment:** Gender roles and identity play a key role in sustainable management and all areas of human activities. The perception of, needs related to, and the use of technologies, instruments, services are gender-based, just like the perception of risks and the effects thereof.

The applicant for a return grant (i.e., the principal investigator) can use the publication for the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme⁵, which explains the role of gender in research content in sufficient detail. The external evaluators of the subject matter will also base their assessment on the publications of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which deal with the issue of assessment and prevention of "unconscious bias" related to gender stereotypes⁶.

2.12 Compliance with the national RIS3 strategy

The applicant must provide the basic identification and indicate whether the research aim complies with one of the domains or missions of the national RIS3 strategy.

The compulsory annex "Returns_RIS3_grant_MŠMT" is used for this purpose.

- 1. Applicants for a return grant will find information on the research topics/areas in the sheets "DS & ST", "DS & KETs", "DS & SHUV", and "RIS3 mission". A more detailed description is available in the national RIS3 strategy⁷.
- 2. If an applicant finds that the project to be implemented complies with one of the RIS3 topics, he/she ticks "YES" in the header of the respective sheet and then highlights in yellow a maximum of three rows in the table in the sheets "DS & ST", "DS & KETs", "DS & SHUV" and/or a maximum of 1 row in the sheet "RIS3 mission".
- 3. If the applicant does not identify compliance of the project to be implemented with one of the RIS3 topics, he/she ticks "NO" in the header of the respective sheet.

3 Completion of a return grant application

A return grant application ("project") is submitted only in English.

A manual for IS Věda is available on the website of the Returns at the CU project8.

3.1 Information section

- Name of the project;
- Annotation of the project;
- Description of the objectives of the project;
- Planned activities (e.g., research, mobility, education), research methods;
- Results and outputs of these activities;
- Schedule for the project;
- Designation of the faculty or higher education institute at which the project is to be implemented;
- Identification and description of the gender dimension of the research content;

⁸ https://opp.cuni.cz/OPP-145.html





⁵ https://opjak.cz/dokumenty/genderova-dimenze/

⁶ More information is available at: https://genderaveda.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NKC Jak-na-zmenu-A5 2021 WEB-1.pdf and at: https://msmt.gov.cz/file/59795

⁷ https://www.ris3.cz/sites/default/files/2024-07/Priloha 1 Karty tematickch oblasti v06.pdf

- The total requested amount on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application (maximum amount of a return grant: CZK 10 million);
- Justification for the project budget (in the annex Calculator Activity 3_return grant application)
 selection of the units and the number thereof and information on the optional items mobility, education, financial support for care provider, fixed costs.

3.2 Research team section

3.2.1 Information on the applicant/principal investigator⁹

- Professional curriculum vitae (relevant experience in the area of science and research is provided);
- Documents proving that the applicant's career break complies with the definition (if the University has the relevant documents available, the applicant may simply refer to this fact in the return grant application);
- Career plan¹⁰ in which the applicant describes his/her future plans in the field of study;
- If the principal investigator is a student of a doctoral study programme, the topic of the dissertation and an affirmation that the topic of the dissertation is not identical to the topic of the return grant.

3.2.2 Information on the supportive professional team (where relevant)

- Information on the members of the supportive professional team;
- Curricula vitae of the members of the supportive professional team.

The applicant fills in the names and each member of the supportive professional team confirms his/her participation in the project after receiving a notification in IS Věda and fills in the required information (CV, etc.). This information may also be provided by the applicant, if necessary.

3.2.3 Information on the mentor

The applicant fills in the mentor's name. An internal mentor (University employee) confirms his/her participation in the project after receiving a notification in IS Věda and fills in the required information (including a professional curriculum vitae). An external mentor (not a University employee) fills in all information, and the applicant uploads the annex with the mentor's confirmation of his/her involvement in the project (the form is available in the annex hereto or for download in IS Věda).

3.3 Annexes section

3.3.1 Compulsory annexes

- Statement by the Dean of the Faculty at which the return grant is to be implemented (in the case of independent higher education institutes Institute of the History of Charles University and Archives of Charles University, Centre for Theoretical Study, Environment Centre of Charles University, and Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education the powers of the dean are exercised by the director thereof) on the following issues:
 - Integration of the applicant for a return grant into the department, his/her potential
 in terms of the further development of the department, and the applicant's potential
 in terms of his/her career development;
 - The faculty's obligation to provide support to the given researcher for the implementation of the research;
 - Recommendations for the implementation of the return grant;

⁹ In the annex Calculator Activity 3_return grant application: principal investigator = main researcher ¹⁰ This is not the career plan within the meaning of Rector's Directive No. 28/2021.





- Compliance of the project with the research aims/topics studied within the organisational unit (e.g., department, faculty) of the applicant for a return grant;
- Suitability of the infrastructure, devices, and equipment available to the applicant for a return grant for the aim of the return grant, that is, that the faculty will provide access to infrastructure, devices, and equipment to the applicant;
- The selected mentor who will be approved by the faculty within the implementation of the mentoring system at the CU;
- Letter of motivation (Letter of intent) from the applicant for a return grant;
- Returns_RIS3_grant_MŠMT compliance with the National RIS3 Strategy;
- Calculator Activity 3_return grant application.

3.3.2 Information filled in by the applicant in the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application

- Position of the principal investigator: junior/senior researcher/Ph.D. student;
- Principal investigator's FTE per calendar month (the involvement corresponds to an FTE of 0.50 to 1.00 per month for the entire duration of the return grant);
- Duration of the return grant: 2 to 3 years (in whole months, i.e., 24 to 36 months);
- Size and composition of the supportive professional team (if any) number of members, FTEs, types of positions and justification for the position; the duration of the involvement of the supportive professional team must correspond to the duration of the project;
- Whether he/she will apply for financial support for the care provider from the project and the
 months of the support and, if the applicant applies for the support, an affirmation that he/she
 has not been granted such support outside the scope of the return grant;
- Whether the applicant will participate in a mobility destination, correction coefficient for the destination, number of months of the stay;
- Whether the applicant will attend specialised educational courses number of classes during the entire duration of the project.

Return grant – main researcher:

- The costs of the unit activity "Return grant main researcher" include, in particular, the labour costs of the principal investigator of a return grant and fixed costs (i.e., costs of material, basic equipment, translations, costs of conferences, and other fees related to the implementation of a return grant, etc.).
- The costs are calculated and reported on the basis of "productive hours".
- The cost of 1 productive hour also includes the minimum labour costs, which mean the minimum amount
 which is actually paid to cover the labour costs of the principal investigator of a return grant (including
 any and all obligatory expenses, which usually include social and health insurance contributions, the
 Cultural and Social Needs Fund, the social fund, and also health insurance for employees who are staying
 abroad, travel allowances, etc.).

Supportive professional team:

• The costs of the supportive professional team include the means allocated to labour costs (wages/salaries/remuneration on the basis of agreements to work outside of regular employment) and they are calculated and reported on the basis of "productive hours".

Mentor:

• The mentor is not included in the Calculator Activity 3_return grant application.

3.4 Advice and recommendations

Planned work capacities – The total work capacity of each researcher at the University (the total under all employment contracts, agreements to complete a job (DPP), agreements to perform work (DPČ), and the work capacities for projects) may not exceed 1.20 FTE for academics and 1.00 FTE for other employees.

Annotation – Provide a brief and succinct description of the project aim, which will be used for the selection of the evaluators.





Description of objectives – Describe the objectives and the research hypothesis.

Gender dimension of the project – If it is not applicable to your grant, provide a mention that it is not relevant for your research or a similar note.

4 Evaluation of return grant applications

4.1 Evaluation process

Return grant applications will be evaluated in two rounds. In the first round, the formal aspects and the admissibility of the applications are evaluated. Applications which are successful in the first round of the evaluation process qualify for the second round, in which the subject matter of the research is evaluated.

4.1.1 Round 1 of the evaluation process: Evaluation of formal aspects and admissibility

Evaluator: Guarantor from the Department of Science and Research ("DS&R").

4.1.1.1 Evaluation criteria for round 1

- Assessment of the **admissibility of the applicant** for a return grant (compliance with the defined parameters): **admissible/inadmissible**, an exclusion criterion;
- **Compliance** of the project with the **research aims/**topics studied within the organisational unit (e.g., department, faculty) of the applicant: **compliance/non-compliance**, an exclusion criterion;
- **Suitability** of the **infrastructure**, **devices**, **and equipment** of the department of the applicant for the aim of the return grant: **suitable/unsuitable**, an exclusion criterion;
- Compliance with the topic and method used for the dissertation in the case of doctoral students (where the topic of the dissertation may not be identical to the topic of the return grant): compliance/non-compliance, an exclusion criterion;
- Compliance of the return grant with the general requirements and conditions of a call within the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme (in particular, checking the activities excluded from the call): compliance/non-compliance, an exclusion criterion.

4.1.1.2 Result of round 1 of the evaluation

- Project proposals which comply with the evaluation criteria for round 1 qualify for round 2 of the evaluation process.
- If the topic of the project is identical to the topic of the applicant's dissertation (in the case of students of doctoral study programmes), the project proposal is excluded from the call.
- If other deficiencies of a formal nature are identified, the applicant is invited to remedy the deficiency within a given deadline.
- If the applicant fails to remedy the deficiency within the given deadline, the project proposal is excluded from the call.

4.1.2 Round 2 of the evaluation process: Evaluation of the subject matter

Evaluators: Two external evaluators are selected from the database of evaluators. If it is not possible to ensure evaluation by two external evaluators, the project proposal is evaluated by one external evaluator and one internal evaluator, who is a researcher.

Evaluators are selected from the database of evaluators based on their field of expertise which corresponds to the field of study and research topic of the principal investigator, that is, the applicant for a return grant. The database of evaluators was created, or updated, and will be used and expanded on the basis of an inter-university agreement entered into by and between 13 Czech public higher education institutions.





4.1.2.1 Evaluation criteria for round 2

- Potential of the project The technical level and quality of the research aim, relevance
 and contribution to the institution, objectives, and activities of the return grant (e.g., mobility,
 education, etc.) and follow-up results and outputs, schedule of the return grant, the 3 E's,
 specificity, and justification of the budget and the direct link thereof to the activities of the
 return grant, including compliance with the information filled in the Calculator Activity
 3_return grant application, relevance of the composition of the team (where relevant), realistic
 and adequate FTEs of the team members, gender in the research content: 0-50 points;
- Motivation, qualification requirements, abilities, and experience of the principal investigator of a return grant in relation to the focus of the return grant (including the potential for team management, where relevant): 0-20 points;
- Potential for the further development of the principal investigator of a return grant and his/her future activities in the given field (career plan) in relation to the return grant: 0-20 points;
- Use of an supportive professional team for the implementation of the return grant: YES 10 points, NO 0 points.

4.1.2.2 Result of round 2 of the evaluation

- Each evaluator awards 0 to 100 points to a project. The final number of points is calculated on the basis of the average number of points awarded by the evaluators.
- If two or more project proposals receive the **same average number of points** and one of the projects may not be supported due to the limited amount of the allocated means, the project proposals concerned will be evaluated by a **third evaluator**.
- If the difference between the number of points awarded by the evaluators to a project proposal is at least 40 points, a third evaluator is requested to provide an opinion.
- If a project proposal is awarded an average of **fewer than 40 points**, a **third opinion** is **not requested**.
- If a project proposal is awarded an average of **fewer than 40 points, it is not recommended for implementation.**
- The Rector issues a decision to allocate the financial means to a project proposal on the basis of the result of the evaluation. A list of successful applications on the basis of the Rector's decision will be published in the usual manner. At the same time, the anonymised opinions of the evaluators and the number of points awarded will be made accessible to the applicants/principal investigators in IS Věda.
- Should the principal investigator refuse the allocation of the financial means, the Rector may
 decide to allocate the financial means to the next project proposal in the order of the points
 received.
- There is no legal right to the allocation of financial means to a project proposal.

5 Implementation of return grants

5.1 Agreement on Allocation of Financial Means

Details regarding the implementation of the project, the allocation of the financial means, and the management thereof are regulated in the Agreement on Allocation of Financial Means ("Agreement"). The Agreement is entered into between the University, faculty or higher education institute, and the principal investigator. If the Agreement is not entered into before the planned commencement of the implementation of the project, the project will not be implemented.





5.2 Interim and final cost report

An audit of the interim and final report of the costs paid from a return grant is performed by the faculty or higher education institute at which the applicant for a return grant is employed.

Legal relationship between Charles University and the principal investigator of a return grant and the conditions for the implementation and the financing of the project.

The principal investigator is responsible for compliance with the rules set out in the Return Grant Scheme and for the due use and management of the allocated means and for compliance with the terms and conditions of the Agreement.

The allocated means may be used only for the implementation of the project.

Consumable material and the equipment necessary for the implementation of the research and non-depreciable assets (tangible and intangible) purchased from the financial means allocated to the implementation of the project is the property of the University and managed by the faculty which is a party to the Agreement.

The disposition of the financial means, reporting of the use thereof, and the performance of the audits of the management of these means are governed by the University and faculty regulations and general legal regulations.

The financial means used are audited by the faculty.

A project must have outputs.

The principal investigator and the faculty or higher education institute agree to:

- Dispose of intellectual property and economic rights to the research and development results in accordance with the applicable legal regulations, in particular, Rector's directive on the application of the works for hire regime at Charles University (No. 17/2018, as amended)¹¹;
- Apply the principles of open science and reflect the relevance of gender in the research content;
- Attribute the achieved results and created outputs supported within the programme to the Returns at the CU project and indicate the author's affiliation to the University and the specific faculty or higher education institute;
- Submit detailed documents on the use of the financial means upon request.

The principal investigator agrees to:

- Submit the Interim Activity Report at the end of each month and the Data Management Plan as a part of the Interim Activity Report, where the first Plan is submitted six months after the actual commencement of the implementation, and to update the Plan as required;
- Submit the Final Activity Report no later than within one month of the termination of the implementation of the return grant;
- If the topic of the dissertation changes, provide a new affirmation confirming that the new topic of the dissertation is different from the topic of the project (only applicable to principal investigators who are students of a doctoral study programme);
- Immediately notify the faculty coordinator of termination or interruption of study/employment.

The faculty or the higher education institute agree to:

- Finance 10% of the costs from its own sources;
- Appoint a contact person (coordinator responsible for the given area) in accordance with the recordkeeping rules who will ensure communication and feedback between the principal investigator, the faculty or higher education institute, and the Rectorate of the University ("Faculty coordinator");
- Audit the use of the allocated financial means;
- Provide the required material and premises and due administrative and technical support to the researcher for the entire duration of the project.

¹¹ Rector's Directive No. 17/2018 is available at: https://cuni.cz/UK-9015.html





5.3 Requirements related to the application of the principles of open science

The principal investigator of a return grant must meet the following requirements related to open science:

The financing of a return grant is conditioned by the application of the principles of open science, which is an approach to the scientific process based on open cooperation and efficient spreading of knowledge. For an efficient and practical cooperation in compliance with the principles of open science, the publication of the results of the project must be 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'.

In line with this concept, the University will ensure, in particular, the following:

- a) **Open access to peer-reviewed scholarly publications** which result from the research funded within the project;
- b) **Management of research data** in compliance with the FAIR principles and open access to the data.

a) Open access to peer-reviewed scholarly publications

- 1. The University will **ensure open access to peer-reviewed scholarly publications**¹² related to the research results of return grants, if any. It will ensure, in particular, the following:
 - The saving of the final published machine-readable electronic version of a publication or the final version of a peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication (i.e., the version in which the comments provided within the peer review have been incorporated) in a reliable repository (e.g., the Charles University repository) without undue delay after the date of publication; ¹³
 - Immediate open access (i.e., without embargo periods, free of charge, permanent, and unlimited) to the saved publication allowing the reuse thereof under the terms of the latest available version of the public licence Creative Commons¹⁴ Attribution International (CC BY 4.0)¹⁵; monographs and other long textual outputs may be made accessible under the terms of a public licence prohibiting derivatives and commercial use (e.g., CC BY-NC 4.0, CC BY-ND 4.0, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0);
 - Provision of information (references) on any other research output or instruments required for the validation of the conclusions of a peer-reviewed publication as a part of the record of the publication (metadata) in a reliable repository.
- 2. The economic rights of the University (or the authors) to the copyrighted publication must be preserved to the extent to enable compliance with the obligations;
- 3. The metadata for the publications saved in the repository must be accessible to the public and machine-readable, so that they comply with the FAIR principles and the General Recommendations for Description by Metadata¹⁶.

¹⁶ See the General Recommendations for Description of Research Outputs and Research Data by Metadata at: https://doi.org/10.48813/yt6w-6h15.





¹² Peer-reviewed scholarly publications means publications in the following categories: J (peer-reviewed academic article), B (scholarly book), C (chapter in a scholarly book), and D (article in proceedings) according to the definition of the categories of results available at: www.isvavai.cz.

¹³ The date of publication means the date of publication of the digital form of the publication by the publisher.

¹⁴ Creative Commons licences are public licences which open new possibilities for the publication of creative works and strengthen the author's position by defining the terms under which the work is made accessible to the public. The <u>CC BY 4.0</u> allows the work to be freely shared (copied and redistributed in any medium or format) and adapted (remixed, transformed, and built upon for any purpose, even commercial) under the condition of attributing the creator. For an explanation of the other licence options, see the overview available at: https://www.creativecommons.cz/licence-cc/varianty-licence/.

¹⁵ If the publisher does not allow a CC BY licence, a more restrictive licence may be used in exceptional cases. It is necessary to prove this fact. The economic rights of the University (or the authors) must still be preserved to a sufficient extent.

b) Management of research data

- 1. The University ensures the due **management of the research data** collected or created in the course of the implementation of the Returns at the CU project in compliance with the FAIR¹⁷ principles by, in particular, the following means:
 - The principal investigator of a return grant is obliged to create the Data Management Plan in compliance with the FAIR principles and to update the Plan regularly. The Data Management Plan is submitted by the principal investigator of a return grant for an evaluation of the subject matter thereof as a part of the Interim Activity Report in IS Věda, where the Plan is submitted for the first time within 6 months of the commencement of the actual implementation of the grant and the principal investigator then updates and submits the Plan in IS Věda as needed;¹⁸
 - Saving the research data, in particular those related to a peer-reviewed scholarly publication, in a reliable repository in accordance with the Data Management Plan as soon as possible;
 - Providing open access to the research data saved in the repository in accordance with the Data Management Plan, ideally under the terms of the latest available public licence Creative Commons Attribution International (CC BY 4.0) or an equivalent thereof, where needed. Open access to data is based on the principle of being 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary' with respect to privacy, protection of personal data, confidentiality, legitimate business interests and third parties' IP rights, national security, and other legitimate interests and restrictions. If it is not possible to provide open access to the data or a part thereof, it must be justified by the principal investigator in the Data Management Plan and the justification must be reviewed regularly;
 - Provision of information (references) on any other research output or instruments required for the reuse or validation of the research results as a part of the record of the research data (metadata) in a reliable repository (unless there are legitimate reasons for restricting the information).
- 2. The metadata on the research data saved in the repository must be accessible to the public (in the extent to which the legitimate interests are protected and restrictions are respected) in compliance with the FAIR principles and machine-readable in accordance with the General Recommendations for Description of Research Data by Metadata (in particular, description of publications and data).¹⁹

A more detailed explanation of open science practices for this call is available in the Open Science Procedures Handbook for the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme available on the website of the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme²⁰.

Open access fees are also eligible fees.

At the time of preparing/opening the call for proposals, the University will organise a seminar for potential applicants for a return grant on other open science practices, as defined in the Open Science Practices Handbook (see https://opjak.cz/dokumenty/otevrena-veda/), so that the applicants can consider their relevance for their research and apply them in their research projects.

²⁰ See the Open Science Practices Handbook available on the website of the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme at: https://opjak.cz/dokumenty/otevrena-veda/.





¹⁷ A more detailed description of the FAIR principles is available, e.g., at: https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/

¹⁸ The management of the data and the compliance thereof with the Data Management Plan of the researcher of the grant is audited by the University. The submission of the Data Management Plan is checked on-the-spot by the management authority (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports).

¹⁹ See the General Recommendations for Description of Research Outputs and Research Data by Metadata (in particular, description of publications and data): https://doi.org/10.48813/yt6w-6h15.

During the preparation of project proposals, applicants can use the consultancy services offered by open science specialists for the Returns programme and the Open Science Support Centre at CU, who can assist the applicants in applying suitable open science practices for the given project.

Since the use of open access practices differs greatly across the different disciplines, other open access practices will not be mandatory for the projects given the field-specific differences and the expected variety of the projects submitted, and there will not be any points awarded for them in order to not put certain fields of study at an advantage.

5.4 Data Management Plan

The Data Management Plan ("DMP") is submitted by the principal investigator of a return grant as a part of the Interim Activity Report, where the Plan is submitted for the first time within 6 months of the commencement of the actual implementation of the grant, and the principal investigator then updates and submits the Plan to University as needed. It is recommended that the principal investigator use the Horizon Europe DMP template to create the DMP, so that the content thereof corresponds to the template.²¹

The principal investigator of a return grant will have access to the FAIR Wizard tool.²² A training session on the creation of the DMP and the use of the tool will be organised for potential applicants for a return grant before the submission of the applications.

The content of the submitted Data Management Plan will be checked by an open science specialist for the Returns call, in particular, with regard to comprehensibility, completeness, and compliance with the FAIR principles. If deficiencies are found in the DMP, it is returned to the researcher for revision.

5.5 Changes during the implementation of return grants

5.5.1 Prohibited changes during the implementation of a return grant

- **The principal investigator may not be replaced.** If the principal investigator quits, the project is terminated;
- The **objectives and the principal object of research** of the return grant may not be changed;
- The total financial means allocated to the return grant may not be increased;
- The amount of the **labour costs may not be lower** than the unit costs on the basis of the Calculator 3_return grant implementation;
- The **version of the Calculator** Activity 3_return grant implementation may not be changed (the calculator used for the approval of the grant must be used for the entire duration of the implementation of the return grant).
- The delivery of outputs may not be waived.

5.5.2 Permitted changes during the implementation of a return grant

- The **methods** used to achieve the objectives of the project (change of the method applied to the research aim) may be changed;
- The **outputs** of the project may be changed;
- The composition of the supportive professional team may be changed. The team may be changed as of the 1st day of the following month, with the exception of termination or interruption of study/employment in the course of the month. The following options are available if a member of a supportive professional team quits:
 - He or she may be replaced by another member who meets the admissibility criteria (after receiving a notification, the new member must confirm his or her participation

²² The tool is available at: https://fair-wizard.cuni.cz/





²¹ The template is available at: https://doi.org/10.48813/sstg-4g21

- in the project and complete the required information; the information may also be provided by the faculty coordinator);
- Divide his or her work capacity among the remaining members of the supportive professional team, so that the team's new work capacity remains within the range for the FTE at the time of the approval of the return grant application and, at the same time, the total work capacity of the team members at the University does not exceed 1.20 FTE for academics and 1.00 FTE for other employees and the total work capacity of the team remains unchanged;
- Decrease the total work capacity of the supportive professional team adequately, which also means an adequate decrease of the project budget for the remaining period.
- The mentor may be replaced: The request for the replacement of the mentor must include the identification information of the new mentor and a preliminary approval by the faculty at which the return grant is being implemented. (The mentor or the faculty coordinator completes the required information in IS Věda.)
- The planned destination and/or foreign institution and/or the duration of the international mobility may be changed after agreement with the faculty coordinator.
- Transfers between the optional budget items on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation are allowed with the approval of the faculty coordinator, where the transfers may not exceed the total approved amount of the return grant.
- The schedule of the return grant may be changed.
- The return grant may be terminated early (in accordance with the procedure for early termination, the Final Activity Report and the partial outputs must be submitted so that at least an aliquot part of the unit is eligible).
- The return grant may be **interrupted**. The implementation of **the project must be completed no later than by 31 January 2029**.

The faculty coordinator must be notified in IS Věda by the principal investigator of any changes well in advance. A change becomes valid upon the entry thereof in the register.

The faculty coordinator ensures the following:

- The change is made in accordance with the above conditions;
- Any related written documents are uploaded to IS Věda;
- The changes are entered in the register of implemented projects.

5.6 Interim Activity Report

The principal investigator of a restart grant will submit a monthly activity report in IS Věda no later than on the 14th day of the following month.

5.6.1 Content of Interim Activity Report

- Description of activities carried out in the given month;
- Description of the work capacity of the principal investigator and the members of the supportive professional team (where relevant);
- Description of the progress made on the outputs;
- Description of any changes;
- Planned activities for the following month;
- Mobility report (where relevant);
- Data Management Plan (if relevant for the given report);
- Cost report prepared on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation and any other relevant documents listed below in Chapter 5.7 "Documenting of unit costs





- reported on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation" for each selected unit cost;
- Summary of the work performed by the entire supportive professional team in the given month (if a supportive professional team is used for the project).

The Interim Activity Report is made accessible to the faculty coordinator for approval. The approved report is then made accessible to the guarantor (Rectorate – DS&R), who may return it for revision if deficiencies are identified.

5.7 Documenting unit costs reported on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3 return grant implementation

5.7.1 Return grant – main researcher

The following documents are submitted:

Scanned employment contract/agreement to perform work (DPČ), including any
amendments thereto (to be submitted once), copy of the employment contract, and,
if necessary, another agreement entered into between the University and the principal
investigator of a return grant which includes the amounts to be paid to the principal
investigator of a return grant.

5.7.2 Supportive professional team for the implementation of a return grant

The following documents are submitted:

- Scanned employment contract/agreement to perform work (DPČ), including any amendments thereto of the employees who are members of the supportive professional team (to be submitted once);
- Scanned summary of the activities performed.

5.7.3 Financial support for the care provider for a child or a close person

The following documents are submitted:

- To be submitted once when the unit cost is first reported: affirmation of the principal investigator of a return grant confirming that he or she provides physical care for a child who is not yet obliged to attend preschool or for a close person who has long-term health issues (under section 3 (c) of the Social Services Act) and that the care was the reason for taking a career break. The affirmation must include the name, surname, and date of birth of the child;
- If the circumstances relevant for the care for the above child or close person change, a notification from the principal investigator of a return grant of the change of the circumstances relevant for the payment of the financial support for the carer for a child or a close person;
- Copy of the employment contract/agreement to perform work (DPČ), including any
 amendments thereto and, if necessary, another agreement entered into between the
 University and the principal investigator of a return grant which proves that the financial
 support has been granted and the amount of the support that is to be regularly paid to the
 principal investigator of a return grant.

5.7.4 Mobility of the principal investigator of a return grant (stays abroad)

The following documents are submitted:

- Copy of the mobility report for each completed stay abroad signed by the principal investigator of a return grant and his/her direct superordinate or authorised representative and an authorised representative of the foreign institution;
- Copy of the travel order of the principal investigator of a return grant excluding the related documents (tickets, etc.);





• **Memorandum or a similar document** proving the approval of the principal investigator's mobility confirmed by an authorised representative of the foreign institution.

5.7.5 Educational activities of the principal investigator of a return grant

The following documents are submitted:

Scanned certificate/confirmation of the completion of an educational course.

5.8 Completion of the implementation and final evaluation of a return grant

Within 1 month of the completion of the implementation of the project, the principal investigator **prepares and submits the Final Activity Report** for the entire research team **in IS Věda**. (If the implementation of a return grant is terminated early, the principal investigator of a return grant submits the Final Activity Report which summarises the results to date.)

5.8.1 Content of the Final Report ("FR")

- Summary of the implementation of the return grant;
- Summary of the achieved results/outputs;
- Assessment of the achievement of the research objectives;
- Summary of the completed training within the principal investigator's educational activities, if any;
- Summary of the research or educational internships abroad (where relevant);
- Description of the principal investigator's career plan²³;
- Assessment of the contribution of the implemented return grant for the principal investigator's;
- Summary of the work performed by the entire supportive professional team during the entire project (if an supportive professional team is used for the project);
- Final cost report prepared on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation and any other relevant documents listed in Chapter 5.7 "Documenting of unit costs reported on the basis of the Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation" for each selected unit cost, completed by the Faculty coordinator.

5.8.2 Evaluation and approval of the FR

- The submitted FR is made accessible to the mentor for the final assessment and evaluation of the overall implementation of the project. The mentor focuses on the achievement of the objectives of the project and the corresponding outputs.
- The FR is made accessible to the faculty coordinator for approval.
- The approved report is then made accessible to the guarantor (DS&R), who may return it for revision if deficiencies are identified.
- The final version of the Final Activity Report in paper form is signed by the principal investigator
 and the mentor, who submit it to the DS&R of the Rectorate of the University within 1 month
 of the completion of the project.

6 Publicity, affiliation, intellectual property (IP) protection

The compulsory publicity instruments in compliance with the publicity rules of the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme²⁴ will be used for the results and outputs of the return grant.

• The rules for the single publicity style must be respected for all information and communication activities. Each document related to the implementation of the project

²⁴ The rules for compulsory publicity are available at: https://opjak.cz/publicita/





²³ This is not the career plan within the meaning of Rector's Directive No. 28/2021.

used for informing the public or a target group of the supported project or a part thereof, including any confirmations of participation or other similar documents, must contain a visible mention that the project was funded from EU sources.

- In addition to the logolink, publications and similar outputs must contain the information that the project was co-funded by the EU within the Returns at the CU project.
- If relevant research results/outputs are created within the return grant projects, intellectual property will be protected in compliance with the principles of open science.

Czech version of the logolink:





English version of the logolink:





In addition to the logolink above, publications and similar outputs must contain the information that the project was implemented with the financial support of the EU in the following form: Publikace byla vydána za podpory Evropské unie a Ministerstva školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy v rámci Operačního programu Jan Ámos Komenský v projektu *Návraty na UK*, reg. č. projektu: CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013839.

If a publication or a similar output is published in English, use the following translation: This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, under the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme, project Returns at the CU (Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013839).

7 Conditions and penalties for a breach of obligations

7.1 Penalty for failure to submit an Interim Activity Report and the Final Activity Report

In the case of a **failure to submit an Interim Activity Report** within the time limit set out in the notice to submit the report, **a penalty is imposed in the amount of the labour costs of the principal investigator in the month** of the implementation of the return grant in which the principal investigator failed to submit the report.

In the case of a failure to submit the Final Activity Report within the time limit set out in the notice to submit the report, a penalty is imposed in the amount of the labour costs of the principal investigator in the last month of the implementation of the restart grant.

7.2 Penalty for failure to achieve the results and outputs agreed in the return grant application

In the case of a **failure to achieve the results and outputs** agreed in the return grant application within the time limit set out in the notice to submit the results and outputs, a **penalty is imposed** in the amount of the labour costs of the principal investigator in the last month of the implementation of the return grant.





8 Application period

Return grant applications may be submitted in IS Věda from 1 Oct 2025 12:00 p.m. to 3 Nov 2025 12:00 p.m.

After the admission of the applications is closed, an evaluation process follows, which will be completed no later than on 31 Jan 2026.

The implementation of all projects may be commenced no sooner than on 1 Feb 2026 and must be completed no later than on 31 Jan 2029.

9 Annexes

- Annex 1 –Statement by the Dean of the Faculty
- Annex 2 Calculator Activity 3_return grant application
- Annex 3 Calculator Activity 3_return grant implementation
- Annex 4 Returns_RIS3_grant_MŠMT
- Annex 5 Confirmation of Participation in a Return Grant



