ask&apply

We start at 13.00

SUOMEN AKATEMIA
FINLANDS AKADEMI
ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Before we start

1. First the presentation – then questions and discussion

   The presentation takes 10 to 15 minutes, and we have a plenty of time for questions and discussion

2. The webinar presentation will be recorded and made available online for two weeks – Q&A and discussion will not be recorded

3. You can write questions during the presentation on Q&A

Q&A
Use following classification:

	Research council, if needed
ARF (Academy Research Fellow)	BHE (Biosciences, Health and Environment)
Postdoc (Postdoctoral researcher)	CS (Culture and Society)
Mobility	NSE (Natural Sciences and Engineering)
Other	

An example:
Postdoc: NSE: What does it mean that RC has reserved six additional posts for certain fields?

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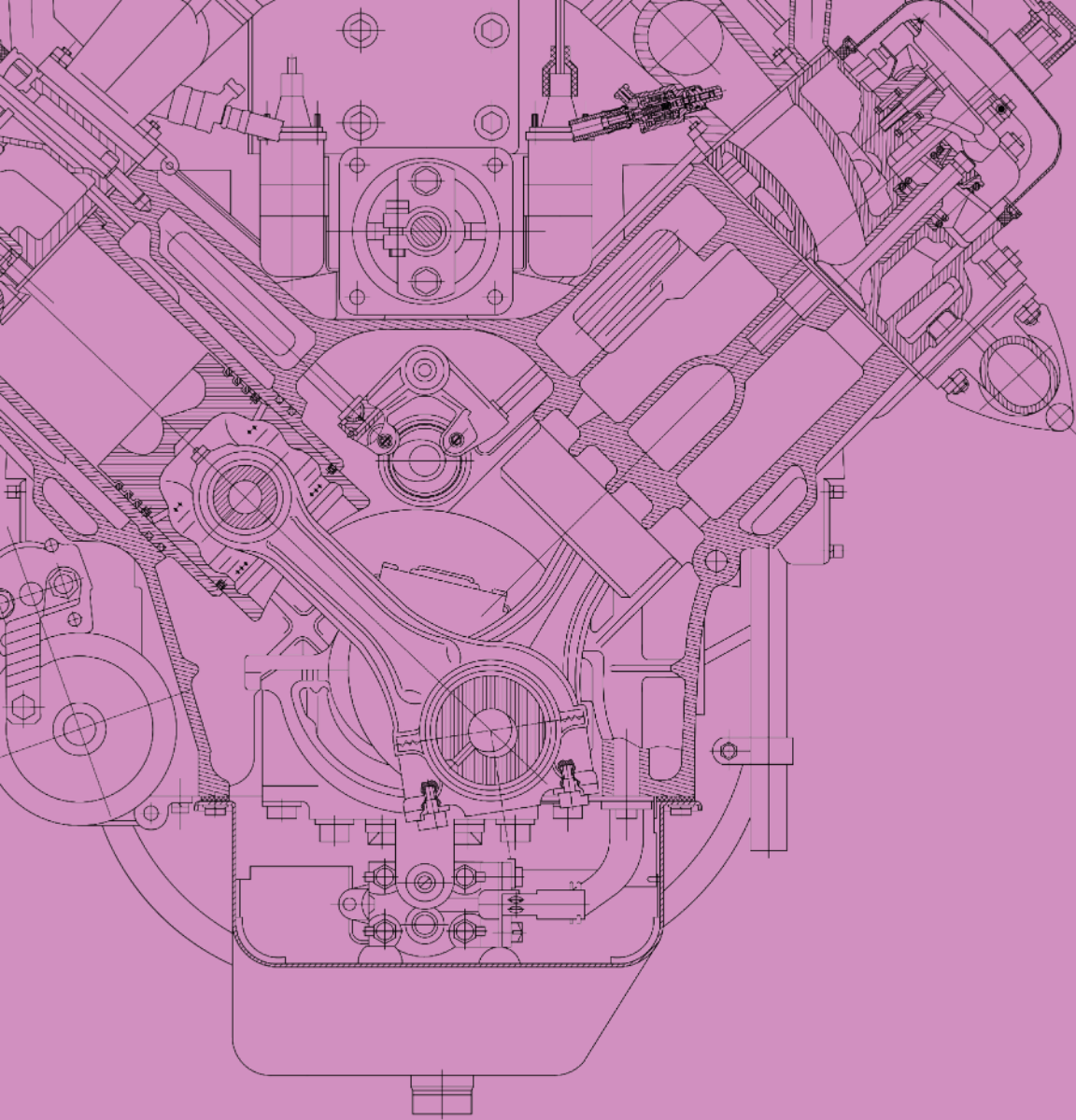
Poll: Which funding form will you apply?

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How applications are reviewed

Review process – who does what and when

- Presenting official – Science advisers
  - Handles the application processing and prepares the review (October – June)

- Reviewer – International panels and experts
  - Prepares scientific review (peer review) and ranks the applications (November – March)
    - Applications for September 2020 call were reviewed in **70 panels** with **over 720 international experts**

- Decision maker – Research councils
  - Makes the funding decisions based on the scientific review, ranking, and the science policy factors including research council's policies (March – June)

Reviewers

- High-level international **peer review** is our key tool for identifying the best and most promising research projects

- Reviewers are esteemed international researchers in their field or otherwise regarded as peers regarding the application

- Panels are renewed for each call and assembled to match the group of applications. As well as the applications, most of the panels are multidisciplinary

- The composition of panels may change annually depending on the number and themes of the applications; there are also joint panels across research council borders

- External reviews are used, if necessary, to support panel review or independently

- More information and the lists of previous reviewers:
  How applications are reviewed - Academy of Finland (aka.fi)

- Read a blog on how the experts are identified and the panels formed: Responsibly organised application review creates base for high-quality research funding
  Kyösti Husso: Responsibly organise - Academy of Finland (aka.fi)

Application main review criteria

- Scientific quality, novelty, and innovativeness of the research as well as its impact within the scientific community

- Feasibility of the research plan and the quality of research environment

- Competence of applicant(s) and/or research team in terms of project implementation

- Collaborative networks, researcher mobility, and researcher training

- Responsible science

- Project's relevance to the call (in thematic funding)

See detailed review criteria in review forms: Guides for reviewers - Academy of Finland (aka.fi)

Scale of rating

Numerical rating scale ranging from 6 (outstanding) to 1-3 (fair to insufficient)

Description	Final rate
Demonstrates extremely high novelty and/or innovation; has potential to substantially advance science at global level; presents a high-gain plan that may include risks	**6 (outstanding)**
Is very good in international comparison – contains no significant elements to be improved	**5 (excellent)**
Is in general sound but contains some elements that should be improved	**4 (good)**
Is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved	**1–3** **(fair to insufficient)**
Contains flaws; is in need of substantial modification or improvement	
Contains severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed project or the application	

Review panels

Panel = chair + 5-11 members, depending on the number of applications to be reviewed in the panel (approx. 20-60 per panel)

Before the panel meeting

- Each application is assigned to (at least) two panel members for draft review and one read-only member before the panel meeting

- In some cases, an external draft review may be requested from an expert outside the panel to provide additional knowledge pertaining to a particular field

- All members have access to all applications and reviews before the panel meeting (excluding conflicts of interest cases)

Review panel meeting

- Panel meetings are held online in 2022

- At the meeting, the panel will concentrate on the strongest applications according to draft reviews

- The panel prepares one consensus panel review report on each application based on the discussions and/or the draft reviews and decides the final overall rating

- Review reports for the applications that receive an overall rating less than 5 (excellent) will include the overall assessment summary section (4 Overall assessment and rating) of the review form

- Panels also rank the strongest applications after scientific review

- Secrecy, ethics and conflicts of interest are taken into account throughout the review process

- Academy staff facilitates the panel work, gives practical advice and reminds of the criteria

Renewed review report

- **Review reports summary section " 4 Overall assessment and rating" has been reorganised**

- The review provides the applicant with clear feedback of strengths and weaknesses

- Applications are rated between 6 to 3 and applications rated 5 (excellent) or 6 (outstanding) are ranked within a panel

- Review reports and ranking lists from the panels are primarily material for decision-making

- Review instructions and funding scheme-based review forms including criteria are openly available throughout the process on AKA's webpage:

  Guides for reviewers - Academy of Finland (aka.fi)

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4 Overall assessment and rating

4.1 Main strengths and weaknesses of project ___(no numerical rating)

Please select major strengths and weaknesses of the application. Give justifications for the selection in sub-item 4.2.

Main strengths (select all relevant aspects):
- ☐ scientific quality
- ☐ innovativeness and novelty value
- ☐ impact within scientific community
- ☐ feasibility of research plan
- ☐ significance and added value of consortium (if applicable)
- ☐ competence of applicant/s in terms of project implementation
- ☐ complementary expertise of research team (in terms of project implementation)
- ☐ significance of collaborative networks in terms of project implementation
- ☐ researcher training including researcher mobility

Main weaknesses (select all relevant aspects):
- ☐ scientific quality
- ☐ innovativeness and novelty value
- ☐ impact within scientific community
- ☐ feasibility of research plan
- ☐ significance and added value of consortium (if applicable)
- ☐ competence of applicant/s (in terms of project implementation)
- ☐ complementary expertise of research team (in terms of project implementation)
- ☐ significance of collaborative networks in terms of project implementation
- ☐ researcher training including researcher mobility

4.2 Justifications and comments

Please justify the selections above by briefly describing the main strengths and weaknesses of the application.

5 Overall rating   Rating (1–6)

Reformed responsible researcher's review (1/3)

- Academy of Finland is a signatory of [DORA](#), the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, which makes recommendations for improving research assessment practices

- Academy is committed to following Finland's national recommendation on [Good practice in researcher evaluation](#)

    - Research evaluation should concentrate on quality of varying outputs not simply on certain quantitative journal-based metrics

    - Recognizing and emphasizing the content rather the venue of scientific outputs

    - To be explicit about the criteria used in research evaluation and rewarding processes

    - Wide set of indicators (qualitative and quantitative) should be defined taking into account different disciplines

Reformed responsible researcher's review (2/3)

Review instructions:

- The review instructions emphasizes the qualitative review of the application as a whole including both the research plan and the competence of the applicant(s)

- Reviewers are asked to consider the relevance of other key research outputs when reviewing the competence of the applicant based on the new element in the application

- Journal metrics like Publication Forum's classification (JUFO) of Journal Impact Factors (JIF) should not be used in review

- Responsible use of research (citation) metrics is emphasized – Academy of Finland do not encourage nor forbid the use or research metrics to supplement research review criteria, however, variation by field or research career stage should be accounted for in the indicators used

Reformed responsible researcher's review (3/3)

- Four important elements in the application for responsible researcher review

  - **New!** Applicants **ten most relevant publication plus ten most relevant other research outputs** including reasoning: scientific and societal impact of the publication/output as well as the impact on the applicant's research career

  - **Publication list**:

    - **New!** In addition to the prohibition to append the JUFO details to your publications the same rule applies to any other JIFs

    - The objectives of the publication plan and data management should clearly emphasize open access

  - **CV**: including for example career breaks, research supervision and leadership experience, teaching merits, and scientific and societal impact such as promoting open science and research, for example the production and responsible distribution of research material and datasets

  - **Research plan**: applicant's/project personnel project-relevant merits:

    - How the project is linked to previous or other research by the applicant

    - How the project advances the research career and independence of the applicant

General feedback from reviewers of 2020 September call

Read more feedback from panels from Research councils web pages [Research councils - Academy of Finland (aka.fi)](aka.fi)

Scientific quality

- Most of the review panels identified excellent or outstanding applications, which were competitive in an international comparison.

- Most of the applications were very **well-written and detailed enough** to allow proper evaluation of all the aspects of the proposal.

- A clear description of the **novelty and innovativeness** of the proposed research was a prerequisite for receiving a high grade in the review item 1.1. Quality of research

- The description of the **implementation of the work was often insufficiently detailed**, and this was reflected in the grade. Many **panels highlighted the importance of including sufficient scientific details** in the application.

- Some panels pointed out that a few innovative and ambitious applications were let down by inappropriate or insufficiently rigorous **statistical analysis plans and sample size calculations**.

- Some scientifically strong applications could have been improved by **clearer description of the roles of the team members and collaborators** in the project, and the allocation of the tasks among them.

- The applicants should clearly state what is the relation of their application to their other (e.g., EU funded) projects.

General feedback from reviewers of 2020 September call

Competence and mobility

- Several panels were impressed by the many highly networked and internationally-oriented applicants.

- The assessment of **independence of the younger researchers** was sometimes difficult. The applicants are encouraged to state how the funding would promote their path to independence, to clearly indicate corresponding authorships, previous grants received as the principal investigator, and to describe their contribution in managing and driving the projects listed in the CV to demonstrate leadership experience.

- Most applications included **good mobility plans** that expanded the applicant's collaboration networks and improved the scientific quality of the proposals.

- The planned **mobility and collaborations should always be described clearly and in sufficient details**. They should support the research plan and contribute to the scientific objectives. The mobility plan should be tightly connected to the schedule of the project.

- Panels commented the absence or quality of **invitation letters from collaborators (Letter of collaboration in Sept call 2021)**. Letters strengthened the applications when they stated the plans for task allocation, data sharing and management, and the added value of the collaboration clearly, and emphasized their role especially when building networks through online collaboration.

- Some panels worried whether younger applicants received enough **mentoring and guidance from their supervisors and support from their home organisations** in preparation of their applications. Less experienced proposal writers should receive more feedback at the early stages of grant writing to improve the quality and success of their proposals.

Thank you!

Time for Questions and Answers

Q&A
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Ask & Apply webinars

Webinars in June:

1. Information for first-time applicants Tuesday 8 June at 13-14

2. What's new? **Friday 11 June at 13-14**

3. Research posts and researcher mobility **Tuesday 15 June at 13-14**

Webinars in August-September:

1. Tips for a good application, the structure of the research plan **Tuesday 24 August at 13-14**

2. How applications are reviewed **Thursday 26 August at 13-14**

3. **How funding decisions are made, ask our research councils Thursday 9 September at 13-14**

4. **AMA Ask Me Anything – our science advisers answer your questions Friday 10 September at 13-14**

Contact us!

- Questions about mobility requirement: **mobility@aka.fi**
- Other questions: get in touch with the call's contact person named in the call text

    OR

- [Questions and feedback](#)

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