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Ask&Apply webinars

- Review and decision-making, 26 Aug at 13.00

- What's new in the September call, 28 Aug at 13.00

- Application structure and tips for the online services (SARA), 31 Aug at 13.00

- Mobility, 1 Sep at 13.00

- Funding for Clinical Researchers, 1 Sep at 16.00

- Tips for first-timers, 2 Sep at 13.00

➢Register: https://www.aka.fi/en/funding/apply-for-funding/ask--apply-info-sessions/

Review & decision making process

Kata-Riina Valosaari

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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 2019 were reviewed in **62 panels** with **over 680 international experts**

- Decision maker – Research councils
  - Makes the funding decisions based on the scientific review 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 assembled to match the group of applications

  - As well as the applications, most of the panels are multidisciplinary

- The composition of each panel changes annually; 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: https://www.aka.fi/en/review-and-decisions/how-the-applications-are-reviewd/

Review panel meeting (remote)

- Panel = chair + 5–13 members, depending on the number of applications to be reviewed (approx. 30–70 per panel)

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

- All members have access to all applications reviewed in the panel

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

- Final consensus review is based on discussion at the panel meeting

- Confidentiality and conflicts of interest are taken into account

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

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Application main review criteria

Mobility important for Postdoctoral Researchers and Academy Research Fellows

Novel research!

International and national research collaborations and researcher mobility

Scientific quality and innovativeness of research plan

Responsible science: ethics, equality and open science

Competence of applicant/research team

Feasibility of research plan

Responsible researcher's review

Quality and strengthening of research environment

See detailed review criteria in review forms: https://www.aka.fi/en/review-and-decisions/application-review-guides-and-forms/

Written and numerical review

- Evaluative comments in review report are particularly valuable to the decision-making bodies

- The review also provides the applicant with important feedback

- Numerical evaluation ranging from 6 (outstanding) to 1 (poor)

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

General feedback from reviewers of September call 2019

✓ *Quality of the applications is generally good to excellent*

✓ *The level of social awareness and relevance (the impact of the research beyond academia, issues relevant to DORA), across all the categories of application, was widespread and often very clearly articulated.*

- *The integration of methods and theory is often lacking, no sufficient theoretical backing*

- *Methods, process and work plan is most important. Sometimes far too much background.*

- *Robust mentoring processes in place within academia could ensure and enhance quality of applications, especially from junior researchers*

- *Applications in all funding instruments would benefit from institutional filtering and mentoring*

Decision making in three research councils

- Three research councils:

  - Biosciences Health and the Environment

  - Culture and Society

  - Natural Sciences and Engineering

- Make the funding decisions based on the results of the peer review (review and ranking), taking science policy into account

  - i.e. equal opportunities for the genders, advancing early-career researchers' careers, supporting researcher mobility, impact of research

  - Read more on: https://www.aka.fi/en/review-and-decisions/funding-decision-process/

- More information on research councils' science policy principles is available on the research councils' websites: https://www.aka.fi/en/research-and-science-policy/research-councils/

Responsible researcher's review – what does it mean?

- Academy of Finland is committed to follow the responsible researche's review priciples according to DORA - San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (https://sfdora.org/read/) and national recommendations by TSV - The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (https://avointiede.fi/sites/default/files/2020-03/tutkijanarviointi.pdf)

- Open review and decision process
  - Review criteria are publishd at the same time as the call announcement
  - Applicant receives the review report after decision making, including names of the panel members
  - Names of all reviewers in September call are published after all decision have been made
  - Research council's justifications for the funding decision are included in the decision notification

- Review emphasizes the quality of the research, not the impact factor of publications
  - The VIRTA service enables direct access to the publication for the reviewer
  - Publication Forum classification (JUFO) is NOT used in the application's list of publications
    - It is meant for evaluating the average quality of large, university-level publication quantities, not for evaluating an independent researcher
- Reviewers (and decision makers) are asked to consider the diverse range of research outputs listed in the CV. Types of outputs vary between disciplines
- Reviewers (and decision makers) are also asked to be sensitive to legitimate delays in publication which may have affected the applicant's record of outputs

Responsible science in review

- The instructions for reviewing responsible science aspects in the applications have been updated:

  https://www.aka.fi/globalassets/20arviointi-ja-paatokset/liitteet/2020/september_call_2020_instructions_panels.pdf

- **Research ethics**

  - Research ethics is a general concept that covers all ethical viewpoints and evaluations that are related to science and research

    https://www.aka.fi/en/funding/apply-for-funding/az-index-of-application-guidelines/ethical-questions/

- **Equality and non-discrimination**

  - Open, transparent expert review procedure in which the qualifications of applicants of either sex are evaluated equally and fairly, is our goal

    https://www.aka.fi/en/funding/apply-for-funding/az-index-of-application-guidelines/equality-and-non-discrimination/

- **Open science**

  - We require that Academy-funded projects see to that the scientific publications in which the project's results are published are open-access, and that the research data produced are made widely available

    https://www.aka.fi/en/funding/apply-for-funding/az-index-of-application-guidelines/open-science/

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