

**ask &
apply**



SUOMEN AKATEMIA
FINLANDS AKADEMI
ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Tips for first-timers 2021

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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 Tuesday 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**

Funding opportunities



For researchers

 Individuals	 Groups	 Thematic funding
Academy Professor Academy Research Fellow Postdoctoral Researcher Clinical Researcher Researcher mobility	Academy Project Centre of Excellence	Academy Programme Targeted Academy Project Strategic research funding



For research environments

Research infrastructure University research profiling Flagship programme
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A detailed technical line drawing of an engine, showing various components like the cylinder block, pistons, and crankshaft. The drawing is rendered in a light purple color against a darker purple background.

**Do I fit with
the aims of
the funding
instrument?**

Funding instruments

Postdoctoral researchers (3-year funding, 200 000 – 300 000 €)

- Max 4 years since doctorate
 - Change of research environment & international mobility
 - Carry out their own research plan, supervise thesis writers
 - Support the most promising researchers **in gaining competence for demanding research or expert positions**
- Means: not to continue business as usual in the same environment (e.g. supervisor's lab)
- *Have established effective national or international collaborative networks. In the review of applications, **particular attention will be paid to the international dimension of the research plan.***
 - *Are encouraged to engage in international mobility and collaboration.*
- Means: If you want to be competitive, take the mobility plan seriously

Other funding instruments in this call

Academy research fellows

(5 years, ~450 000 €)

- 3-9 years since doctorate
- Change of research environment & international mobility
- High scientific quality, extensive research networks, chance to develop skills of academic leadership **and to establish themselves as independent researchers**

Academy Projects

(4 years, 400-500 000 €)

- **Research teams (incl. direct research costs)**, PI's own salary should mostly be covered by the site of research
- promote the quality and diversity of research, scientific impact and impact beyond academia as well as science self-renewal. Emphasis also on supporting breakthroughs and top-tier int. collaboration
- Additional funding available for early career researchers (within 10 years after PhD)

Clinical researcher

(4 years, 240 000 €)

- Part-time research by physicians and other researchers engaged in clinical practice.
- The aim is to promote clinical research careers in cooperation with, for example, university hospitals, and to **encourage medical doctors and other researchers** working in clinical practice to engage in research alongside clinical practice.
- The funding is granted for part-time salary costs (20–50% of working hours) and for research costs.

MOBILITY

Please consider attending Ask & Apply webinar

Tues 15.6. 13-14 o'clock

Mobility

- Mobility is of particular importance to early-career researchers in improving the quality of their research and supporting their career development.
- Changing research environments (the mobility requirement) is an eligibility criterion (Postdocs & Academy Fellows)
- Choose the best research environment for mobility to increase your **independence, competitiveness and networks**, and to make the best out of this opportunity to learn new methods, skills, broaden networks etc.
- Take the mobility plan seriously!
 - ✓ Read the Research councils' 'Funding criteria and policies'
 - ✓ Attend our **mobility webinar** on **June 15**, 1 p.m.
 - ✓ Any questions about mobility requirements?
Contact our mobility advisers by email: **mobility@aka.fi**

Aha! **Real mobility** benefits my career development.



Researcher mobility funding

- based on Academy's bilateral agreements with foreign funding agencies

Four mobility calls

1. Mobility grant to Japan, Taiwan or Russia
2. Mobility invitation from Taiwan or Russia to Finland
3. Funding for mobility seminar with Japan or China
4. Funding for mobility cooperation with India, China or Germany

Structured research plan

- **Max. 5 pages** (+ references)
- Filter the text through following perspectives:
 - reasons for the application?
 - international interaction of Finnish researchers and the internationalisation of research environments?
 - quality, impact and innovativeness of the research?
- Instructions available
- Evaluation forms available

India has changed

- Mobility call with the DBT (Indian Department of Biotechnology)
- Cooperation with biology research
- Eligibility rule: both collaborating parties (Finnish and Indian) submit joint application to their respective funding agency (i.e. the same "counterpart model" as with China and Germany).

A detailed technical drawing of an engine, showing various components like the cylinder block, crankshaft, and pistons. The drawing is rendered in a light blue color and is positioned on the left side of the slide.

Things to consider when writing your application

The structure of the research plan – ALL PARTS ARE IMPORTANT!

1. Aim and objectives

- Significance of the research project
- Research questions & hypotheses
- Expected results & impact

2. Implementation

- Work plan & schedule
- Data & methods
- Risk assessment

3. Research team and collaborators

- Merits & justifications

4. Responsible science

- Research ethics
- Open science
- Equality

5. Societal effects and impact

- Impact beyond academia
- Sustainable development

The "critical" parts

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Match your methods and aims

- Focused methodological plan directly tied to your specific aims
- Enough details on your plans and how to do this in practice

→ **Implementation!**

Write your research plan in accordance with the review form

1. Quality of research described in the plan

1.1 Scientific quality, novelty and innovativeness of the research Sub-rating (1–6)

*Significance of the project; Objectives and hypothesis; Ambitiousness and state of the art of the objectives (possible novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines); **Scientific impact of the research**; Potential for breakthroughs or exceptionally significant outcomes; etc.*

→ Don't leave it for the reviewer to figure it out and "read between the lines"! → Write it clearly within your research plan!

Show your enthusiasm

- Your excitement towards your research questions and researcher career should be seen from your application
 - Choice of research visits
 - Knowledge of recent literature
 - Novel ideas, 'out of the box' –thinking
 - Career development (CV)

Getting your message across

With so many applications, how do you make yours **stand out from the crowd?**

- Make it clear and understandable.
- 3 main points:
 - Scientific excellence, scientific excellence and scientific excellence!
- Questions you should answer:
 - **Why this project?** What are the results? What are the impacts?
 - **Why now?** Why is the project important?
 - **Why me?** And why this research team?
 - **How much?**
- THE ABSTRACT → Think of it as your sales pitch.



**Most common
critique from
evaluators?**

Methods are often poorly explained

→ Go down to details and include proper risk analysis

“A number of applications were lacking important methodological details: therefore potentially good projects were being scored as lower quality.”

Be ambitious, but don't overdo it

"As presented, the publication strategy is annoyingly too ambitious, and reflects a blunt underestimation of the difficulties that can be encountered in the course of the project"

Do something new

Where the
magic happens

Comfort
zone

*“The project does not go beyond the
already defined scopes and networks
of the hosting laboratory”*

Spelling & proper English

Put yourself in the shoes of the reviewer: make it understandable, enable skimming

“The better use of figures and tables would make the proposal more illustrative and improve the general readability.”

“At the end I am left with the feeling this was hastily written proposal.”

GET HELP!

START EARLY!

Research is teamwork, writing applications should also be

GET HELP from

- Collaborators listed in your application
- Senior scientist(s)
- Peer(s)
- Someone who has received the funding
- Research Services (e.g. budgeting)
- Science advisers and 'Helpdesk' at Academy of Finland

Seek external reviews prior to submission, ideally both a specialist and a generalist

✓ Checklist:

TIP: see [A-Z index of application guidelines](#)

- ✓ Read the call text carefully > Apply for funding <http://www.aka.fi/en/funding/apply-for-funding/>
 - Choose the right funding opportunity → What are the objectives?
 - Read all guidelines and conditions

- ✓ Follow the right structure
 - [Curriculum vitae \(CV\)](#) and [Publication list](#)
 - The mobility plan is a part of your application (obtain letters of invitation etc. early enough)
 - The [abstract](#) is a concise scientific account of your research ≠ The public description of your project
 - Write clearly, focus on describing your methods and implementation

- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the [review questions](#) and other guidelines for reviewers
- ✓ Know the [\(research policy\) factors](#) that influence the research council's decision
- ✓ START YOUR APPLICATION EARLY (AS OF 11.8.) : SIGN UP, UPDATE YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS (My account)
→ www.aka.fi/en > [Go to the online services](#); **submit your application by 22.9. or 29.9. (two deadlines!!)**

- ✓ Send us your questions (you will find our contact information in the call text)

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