



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR EVALUATING APPLICATIONS – TERMS OF REFERENCE

### for Competitive funding to strengthen universities' research profile

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#### 1 Aims of the funding instrument

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support and speed up the strategic profiling of Finnish universities in order to improve the quality of research. The funding is intended for measures that strengthen the research areas outlined in the universities' strategies. In the 2022 call (PROFI 7), the funding is fixed-term and may be granted to support research areas chosen by Finnish universities based on their strategy. The funding aims to promote these areas. In their applications, universities are asked to provide an overall picture of their plans for profiling and distribution of work, both from the university's perspective and in relation to other universities, if applicable. The funding is open to all scientific, scholarly and artistic disciplines.

Another aim is to contribute to intensifying strategic cooperation between Finnish universities and with universities of applied sciences, research institutes, hospital districts and other relevant actors, and to clarifying the responsibilities between these actors. The regional and thematic competitive clusters formed via such collaboration and distribution of work may also include actors from the private and nonprofit sectors. For more information, please see the **Call for applications**.

## 2 Evaluation

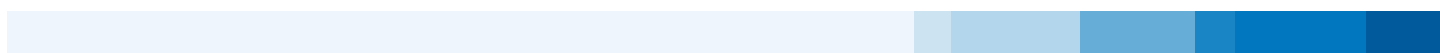
The applications submitted by universities will be reviewed by an international panel. Experts recruited to the panel must have extensive experience and understanding of the higher education field, research and the development of universities. The perspective of strategic development will be given prominence in the review. Key considerations will include the concreteness and viability of the action plans and the individual profiling measures proposed in each profiling area. Based on the panel's review, the decisions on funding will be made by the Academy of Finland.

In addition to the applications submitted, the review panel has access to **a background material document** which describes briefly the previous six calls of the funding instrument, university reform in Finland and the model for the government core funding to universities. Further, the background material document includes data of the distribution of professors between disciplines by university, bibliometric data of the performance of Finland and Finnish universities in the 2000s, a link to the Strategy for National Infrastructures in Finland 2020 – 2030, the National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation and the Vision and Roadmap of the Research and Innovation Council.

The panel meeting and interviews will be organized as online meeting.

The evaluation panel members are asked to familiarize themselves with the applications and background material. Each application will be assigned to two panel members for preliminary evaluation, and panel members are asked to write **draft reviews** before the panel meeting (3-5 draft reviews/panel member). These draft reviews form the basis for the working material for the actual evaluation in the panel meeting. The panel members are also asked to read a few other applications in order to discuss them during the meeting. The panel will interview the management of each university. After the interviews the panel members will finalise **the review statements, rating, and ranking of the applications** during the panel meeting.

The following review questions will be applied in reviewing applications submitted to this call:



Review questions (1–5 for each profiling area):

1. Justification for the selection as a strategic profiling area
  - How plausible are the arguments for the area being selected as a strategic profiling area?
2. Measures, resources, schedule, follow-up, risk management
  - How viable, feasible and plausible is the action plan with regard to the measures, schedule, resources, follow-up of the implementation and impacts, and risk management?
3. Level of research
  - How viable, feasible and plausible is the plan to reach or to maintain the aspired international level of research and to renew research?
4. National and international collaboration
  - How viable are the arrangements for distribution of work and collaboration with other Finnish universities, Finnish research institutes, polytechnics, hospital districts and other partners in the profiling area including international collaboration? E.g. complementarity, research-related added value, infrastructures and data sharing.
5. Societal impact
  - What is the relevance and significance of the measures with regard to promoting knowledge transfer, competence-based growth and other needs in society?
6. Overall assessment and rating
  - How justified and clear is the action plan as a whole in relation to the university's strategic profiling areas and themes? To what extent will the action plan strengthen the implementation of the strategy? What is the university's overall commitment to the action plan?
  - Summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the proposed action plan
  - Recommendations and other feedback for the university; development needs and opportunities
7. Overall rating

Please write the review based on the defined review questions. It is important to give feedback both on the university's action plan as a whole and on the proposed profiling measures individually in relation to the aspired level of research. Profiling areas can be: i) existing high-quality areas, ii) emerging areas with potential to reach the top level, and/or iii) new areas with high potential. In addition to your written comments, please give **two ratings**: 1) **a rating of each profiling area**, and 2) **a final rating** for the application. The review panel will also rank the applications.

The review focuses both on a university's overall action plan and on how significant, concrete and realistic each individual profiling area and measure is. The review report is based on the application and the interview.

**Rating of a profiling area:**

**6/6:** The measures, schedule, resources, follow-up of the implementation and impacts, and risk management plan are clearly very viable, feasible and plausible. The arrangements for distribution of work and collaboration have significant added value for the aspired level of research. The measures strongly promote knowledge transfer, competence-based growth and other needs in society.

**5/6:** The measures, schedule, resources, follow-up of the implementation and impacts, and risk management plan are viable, feasible and plausible. The arrangements for distribution of work and collaboration have added value for the aspired level of research. The measures promote knowledge transfer, competence-based growth and other needs in society.

**4/6:** In general sound but contains a few elements that could be improved.

**3/6:** In general sound but contains important elements that should be improved.

**2/6:** In need of substantial modification or improvement.

**1/6:** Severe flaws in the plan.

**Final rating:**

**6 Outstanding:** The action plan includes viable, significant and very concrete profiling measures that clearly promote strategic profiling within the university and that contribute to significantly enhancing research quality in the Finnish research and innovation system.

**5 Excellent:** The action plan includes viable, significant and very concrete profiling measures that promote strategic profiling within the university and that contribute to enhancing research quality in the Finnish research and innovation system.

**4 Good:** The action plan includes viable and concrete profiling measures. The proposed profiling measures should have been more extensive to reach the target and to contribute to the Finnish research and innovation system.

**3 Modest:** The action plan includes moderate profiling measures. For instance, the profiling measures should have been more extensive or viable.

**2 Weak:** The action plan is not viable in its present form.

**1 Unsatisfactory:** The action plan is out of scope.

### 3 Secrecy and integrity of the evaluation process

Application documents should be handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

The Academy of Finland is committed to following the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity for responsible conduct of research.

All reviews must be handled confidentially, competently and impartially, based on the criteria set for the review process. Care must be taken to ensure that the review complies with general stipulations about conflicts of interest. Prior notice must be given if a reviewer has economic or other affiliations or significantly different schools of thought in relation to the applicant under review. This is a way to avoid conflicts of interest.

As a reviewer, you are not allowed to disclose any information concerning application documents or reviews to outsiders, nor are you allowed to use this secret information to your

own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage. You may not reveal to outsiders that you are assessing the application of a particular applicant. If you are contacted by anyone, including the applicant, who has questions about the application or reviews, please advise them to contact the Academy of Finland. Disclosing the contents of research plans to third parties or contacting applicants personally without explicit agreement to do so are regarded as instances of inappropriate behaviour on the part of reviewers. Once the review has been completed, you are required to destroy all application documents and any copies made of them.

After the funding decisions have been made, the Academy will publish a list of names, current positions and institutions of all individual reviewers and panel members enlisted in the call. In addition, the applicants will see the names of all panel members in the panel review report. If requested, the draft reviews and the names of reviewers that have supplied the draft reviews will also be disclosed to the applicant (under the Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities).

Confidentiality must also be maintained after the review process has been completed. After the panel has given its review report, the Academy will send them to the universities for potential comments. The composition of the panel and the positive funding decisions will be shown on the Academy's website after the decisions have been made. By request, applications, panel reviews, rating and ranking and the names of reviewers giving the preliminary reports are public. If you do not wish your name to be published on the Academy's website, please inform us.

#### **4 Conflicts of interest**

Reviewers are required to declare any personal interests according to the following criteria:

You must disqualify yourself if you or a close person to you (e.g. a family member, relative or a close friend) can in any way benefit or suffer specific loss from the approval or rejection of the proposal. You must also disqualify yourself if you are or a close person to you is a member of a governing organ of an applicant or in other position that might compromise your impartiality.

You are also disqualified to review the application if your impartiality may otherwise be endangered, or if you feel that you have a conflict of interest.

If you identify any conflicts of interest, please notify the Academy as soon as possible.

## 5 Responsible science

### Research ethics

The Academy of Finland requires that the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity guidelines [Responsible conduct of research and procedures](#) (link takes you to the Board's website) for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland are followed in all Academy-funded research. We also require that researchers follow ALLEA's (All European Academies) [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (link takes you to ALLEA's website) when engaging in international collaboration.

### Equality and non-discrimination

The Academy of Finland's research funding promotes equality and non-discrimination as part of responsible science. To secure responsible reviews and decision-making, the Academy is, in accordance with its [Equality and non-discrimination plan](#) committed to defining the means to support combining work and family life and the research careers of women in all funding opportunities. Therefore, career breaks due to certain leaves (maternity, paternity, parental or childcare leave, or military or nonmilitary service, other special reasons, such as long-term illness) cannot be evaluated negatively in the evaluation process.

The Academy requires that all Academy-funded research promotes gender equality and non-discrimination. Academy reviews and decision-making emphasise the importance of promoting equality and non-discrimination either in the suggested project or in the wider society. Gender is not part of the information in the applications under review.

In the review of applications, the Academy asks reviewers to pay attention to the unconscious bias that affects us all. Unconscious bias refers to a positive bias towards our “ingroup” and a negative bias towards our “outgroup”. For example, when you are assessing whether the research is groundbreaking and whether the applicant is competent enough to carry out the proposed project, pay special attention to the possible unconscious biases that you might have and that could have an impact on your evaluation. The very act of realising hidden biases makes them less powerful.

In review (especially in panels), it is easier to detect unconscious biases in others than in yourself. We ask you to be prepared to call out bias when you see it.

### **Open science**

The Academy of Finland is committed to promoting the principles and practices of open science to improve the quality, responsibility and social impact of science. The goal is to make all outputs produced and used in research (research publications, data, methods and metadata) widely available for reuse. The principles of open science must be pursued with due attention to good scientific practice and law. The degrees of data openness may justifiably vary, ranging from fully open to strictly confidential. Read more about [the Academy of Finland’s open science policy](#) on our website.

The Academy is a member of cOAlition S and uses Plan S principles and practices in its funding guidelines. In addition, the Academy applies [the National Policy for Open Access to Scholarly Publications](#). When reviewing publication plans, reviewers are asked to take note of the Academy’s open access policy and value the applicants’ efforts to publish in OA journals or use other alternatives that secure the immediate open access of articles. All peer-reviewed articles written in Academy-funded projects should be published with immediate open access. Researchers may use OA journals, platforms, repositories or journals that commit to full OA by 2024.



When reviewing applicants' preliminary presentations on data management and open access to research data, reviewers are asked to take note of the Academy's research data policy and value the applicants' effort to open the research data collected during the research. Reviewers are also asked to support well justified arguments, if the applicant states that no research data is collected or gives understandable reasons for not opening the research data. The funded projects submit a full research data management plan after the positive funding decision has been made.

## 6 The Academy's online services – a short guide

Supported web browsers: Internet Explorer (IE) 10 and newer; Mozilla Firefox (FF) 45 and newer; Mac Safari 9 and newer.

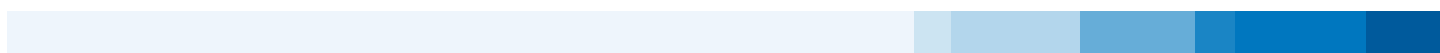
### 1. Finding your review requests and all applications

- Go to the Reviews tab on the welcome screen (Desktop menu). You will find both your open (not submitted) and submitted reviews under the Reviews menu, on respective tabs.
- To read all applications, click on Download ZIP file of all applications. The application PDF files are saved in one compressed ZIP file.
- To read general documents for the panel members, click the link of the document on the file list.

### 2. Writing and editing the review

- Click on Edit review on your list of reviews to open the form with which you enter the review.
- Click on View application if you want to open the application to read, print or save it (can be saved as a PDF file). Click the Save button every now and then because connection will be closed automatically after 30 minutes of inactivity. After saving, you can safely Log out to enter the review later.

### 3. Submitting the review





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- Click on the Submit button on the review.
- After submitting, you cannot edit the review unless requesting it from the Academy's science adviser.

The staff of the Academy of Finland will provide all the technical assistance for the panel during the online meeting. We will provide more details closer to the online panel meeting.

