



Instructions for reviewing applications

Competitive funding to strengthen university research profiles (Profi 9)



Research Council of Finland

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1. Aims of Profi funding scheme

The aim of the Profi (competitive funding to strengthen university research profiles) funding scheme 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. Profi 9 funding will support research profiling by enabling the recruitment of international researchers in those profiling areas that universities have developed based on previous Profi decisions taken by the RCF (Profi 1–Profi 8).

The funding is intended for the recruitment of researchers into posts at career stages 3 or 4 in the recruiting university's profiling area. The letter of intent submitted at this call stage shall not specify the persons to be recruited, but justify the recruitment needs in the chosen profiling area.

For more information, please see the [call for applications](#).

2. Review of applications

The applications submitted by universities will be reviewed by international experts. Experts must have extensive experience and understanding of the higher education field, research and the development of universities. Based on the expert review, the funding decisions will be made by the Research Council of Finland (RCF).

The review focuses on both how viable and impactful the measures to advance the profiling area(s) through new recruitment(s) are and how feasible the plan is as regards supporting the successful integration and long-term retention of the recruited researcher(s).

In addition to the applications submitted, the experts have access to **a background material document**, which describes briefly the previous eight Profi calls, the university reform in Finland and the model for government core funding to universities.

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

1. Recruitments

1.1. What is the expected impact of the planned recruitment(s) on strengthening the selected profiling area(s)?

1.2. How convincing and feasible is the recruitment plan regarding schedule, risk management and follow-up?

2. Integration and exit plans

2.1. How convincing and feasible are the plans to promote the successful integration of the researcher(s) into the host institution?

2.2. Are there convincing plans in place for the longer-term retention of the recruited researcher(s)?

3. Overall assessment

3.1. Main strengths and weaknesses

3.2. Other remarks (if any)

- For example, you can give your recommendation about the reasonable number of recruited researchers and your opinion about the strongest profiling areas in the proposal.

4. Overall rating

Each application will be assigned to two experts, who will be asked to write individual review reports (5–7 reviews/expert). Please note that the individual review reports will be given to the applicants as is, including the names of the reviewers.

Please write the review based on the defined review questions. In addition to your written comments, please give **an overall rating** for the application.

Overall rating:

6 Outstanding: The action plan includes highly viable and impactful measures that clearly advance the profiling area(s) through new recruitment(s) and effectively supports the successful integration and long-term retention of the recruited researcher(s).

5 Excellent: The action plan includes viable and impactful measures that advance the profiling area(s) through new recruitment(s) and supports the successful integration and long-term retention of the recruited researcher(s).

4 Good: The action plan includes viable and impactful measures that advance the profiling area(s) through new recruitment(s) and supports the integration and long-term retention of the recruited researcher(s).

3 Modest: Is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved

2 Weak: Is in need of substantial modification or improvement

1 Unsatisfactory: Has severe flaws in the plan

3. The RCF online services – a short guide

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.

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.

Submitting the review

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

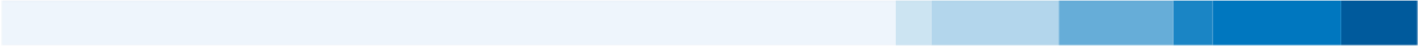
4. Secrecy and integrity in the review process

According to the Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities, research plans, abstracts, progress reports and review reports are secret documents. Application documents should therefore be handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

The RCF is committed to following the [Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland](#) (PDF).

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. This also applies to entering this information in AI tools such as ChatGPT (see also the [European research integrity guidelines](#) (PDF) on the use of AI tools in research or review). In addition, you are not allowed to use secret information to your own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage.



You may not reveal to outsiders that you are assessing the research plan of a particular researcher.

If you are contacted by anyone, including the applicant, who has questions about the application or reviews, please advise them to contact the RCF. 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. In addition, the Finnish Criminal Code provides for the punishability of breaches of the obligation to maintain the secrecy of a document kept secret under the Act on the Openness of Government Activities and breaches of the nondisclosure obligation and the prohibition of use.

Reviewers are guilty of research misconduct if they misappropriate information from applications. This also includes copying any part of an application. The quality of the review is not a research-ethical issue unless the review has been conducted carelessly, which may give an appearance of a review that deliberately either underrates or overrates the applicants under review.

The composition of the panel and the positive funding decisions will be shown on website after the decisions have been made. By request, applications, review reports, rating and ranking are public.

Confidentiality must also be maintained after the review process has been completed.

5. Conflict 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 us as soon as possible.

6. Reviewer's declaration

Please acknowledge that by accepting the task of a reviewer you guarantee not to disclose the information you receive and not to use it for anybody's benefit or disadvantage. Further, you affirm that you will immediately notify the RCF if you have a conflict of interest in one or more applications.

7. Responsible science

7.1. Research ethics

The RCF requires that the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity guidelines [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#) (PDF) are followed in all RCF-funded research. We also require that researchers follow ALLEA's (All European Academies) [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (PDF) when engaging in international collaboration. The same guidelines also oblige researchers in their work abroad. Read more about the [research ethics](#) on our website.

7.2. Equality and nondiscrimination

The RCF promotes equality and nondiscrimination as part of responsible science. To secure responsible reviews and decision-making, we are, in accordance with the [Equality and nondiscrimination plan](#), committed to defining the means to support combining work and family life and the research careers of women in all funding opportunities.

We require that all RCF-funded research promotes gender equality and nondiscrimination. Our reviews and decision-making emphasise the importance of promoting equality and nondiscrimination 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, we ask 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'. 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.

7.3. Open science

The RCF 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 [our open science policy](#) on our website.