

Instructions for reviewing funding applications - 2027 winter call

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1. Objectives of the Research Council of Finland and the funding schemes

The Research Council of Finland's (RCF) mission is to open up new avenues for excellent, responsible and high-impact research. Our objectives are to advance new scientific breakthroughs and solutions for the benefit of society; the capacity of research for renewal and reform; and better and higher-impact skills and competence. Our funding is based on open competition, independent peer review and responsible science. We grant funding to researchers and research teams as well as to the most promising early-career researchers through different funding instruments.

1.1. Academy Project Funding

The aim of the funding scheme is to produce high-quality and high-impact research, facilitate groundbreaking research initiatives and strengthen high-level expertise. The review should focus on the scientific quality of the proposed research compared to international standards as well as on scientific impact and wider impact, if relevant in the project, and project implementation. The implementation shall be based on the most appropriate scientific methods and may include innovative and demanding approaches that are systematic and credible, identifying the uncertainties involved in the implementation and demonstrating the ability to manage the risks associated with the implementation of the research. In addition, the review will focus on the research team's competence and potential to conduct demanding and uncertain research. The review should also pay attention to the development of the research team's scientific, methodological and other competence, as well as to researcher training and guidance at all career levels. The funding is applied for to employ a research team, and it may be applied for by individual research teams or consortia composed of two or more research teams.

The Academy Project call is open every two years to all applicants who meet the general eligibility criteria. However, the reapplication restriction¹ does not apply to applicants who received an overall panel rating of 5 (excellent) or 6 (outstanding) in the previous round yet did not receive funding. The review results of the 2027 Academy Project call will determine the eligibility to apply in the next round (i.e. the 2028 winter call). Read more in the [call text](#).

1.2. Academy Research Fellowships

The objective of the Academy Research Fellowship funding is to support early-career researchers on fast career tracks and help them to increase their competencies, make significant career progress towards the most demanding research positions and achieve an established position in the national and international research community.

The review should focus on the applicant's future potential to achieve the objectives of the funding and on the scientific quality, feasibility and impact of the research plan. When assessing the applicant, emphasis should be placed on future potential and planned development. Past achievements should be considered mainly as evidence supporting the feasibility of the

¹ Update 24 Sep 2026: The term 'resubmission restriction' was corrected to 'reapplication restriction'.



applicant's plans. Assess merits qualitatively, taking into account the applicant's career stage and possible career breaks. Read more in the [call text](#).

2. Role of experts and the RCF

Experts are invited to review the scientific excellence of the applications. The experts are esteemed, mostly international researchers in the fields of the winter call panels. The review of applications follows a two-stage process. In the first stage, experts are asked to give at least two individual reviews on the application. If at least one expert gives an overall rating of 5 or 6, the application will proceed to be reviewed by a panel. The other applications will continue directly to decision-making. The funding decisions are made by the RCF's decision-making bodies.

2.1. Panel chair

Each panel is assigned a chair from among the panel members. The duties of the chair are to chair the panel meeting via an online platform (Teams), lead the discussion and ensure that all applications are reviewed in a responsible and fair manner. The chair also has duties as a panel member. After the panel meeting, the chair is expected to deliver a brief memorandum including feedback on the review process and the panel meeting.

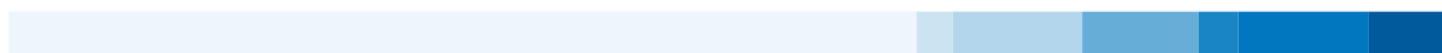
2.2. Individual reviewers and panel members

Experts may act as individual reviewers and panel members. The duties of individual reviewers are to review and write review reports on the applications allocated to them. As a rule, individual reviewers also participate in the panel as members. All panel members are expected to actively participate in the panel meeting.

Applications will be assigned to at least two individual reviewers and/or possibly a reader in the panel review phase. The reader is asked to form an opinion of the application without writing a review. One of the reviewers will be a summariser in the panel meeting and will write the final panel's summary assessment for the application.

2.3. Panels

The RCF winter call has 39 review panels, which will review applications for Academy Project Funding and Academy Research Fellowships. The applicants submit their applications to a





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single panel using the [guidelines and panel descriptions](#) (link takes you to the RCF website). A panel may be split if it receives a high number of applications.

Panels consist of a chair, a possible vice chair and panel members representing the scope of the panel.

2.4. RCF officials

The RCF's officials invite the panel members and, if needed, additional external individual reviewers to support the panel, provide instructions on the review process and organise instructive webinars and pre-panel meetings when relevant. The officials also take care of the practical arrangements in the panel meeting and follow that the review process is carried out according to established RCF procedures.

2.5. Decision-making bodies

After receiving the review reports and panel rankings, the [scientific councils](#) (link takes you to the RCF website) make the final funding decisions. The decisions are based on the peer review and the panel ranking, but factors related to science policy may also influence the decisions. Examples of such factors are the promotion of scientific research in a multidisciplinary manner, dismantling of gendered constructs in research and the scientific community, promoting diversity in research and the scientific community, and supporting sustainable development.

3. Review and ranking

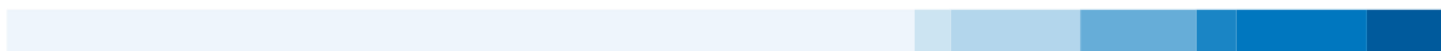
3.1. Review criteria and rating scale

The review forms for the different funding schemes contain specified review criteria. The reviewers examine the application as a whole in relation to the funding scheme and the objectives of the project. The objectives of the funding schemes are presented in section 1 above.

Academy Project Funding

The scientific review of the application is based on the following criteria:

- Quality of research
 - Excellence





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- Impact
- Implementation

Academy Research Fellowships

The scientific review of the application is based on the following criteria:

- Applicant
 - Career development
 - Qualifications and professional development
- Quality, impact and implementation of research
 - Quality and impact of research
 - Implementation

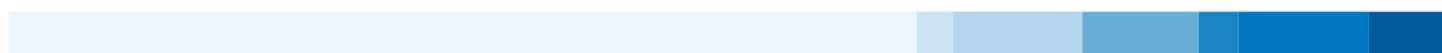
The review of the scientific quality of the Academy Research Fellowship application is influenced by the applicant's competence, expected achievements and potential and the quality of the proposed research plan. The review takes into account the applicant's scientific merits since obtaining the doctoral degree and their career stage, including any career breaks.

Written reviews

Written reviews play a crucial role in aiding the decision-making bodies. In addition, they provide important feedback to applicants. Reviewers should therefore:

- write evaluative comments and give justifications using full sentences
- avoid descriptive comments and copying text directly from the application
- write comments and give subratings under each review item, taking into consideration the specific guidelines for each item (however, item 'Review panel's summary assessment' will be written and finalised during the panel meeting)
- maintain coherence throughout their comments and give constructive feedback
- follow the rules and principles of responsible review.

After the funding decisions have been made, the applicants will receive the individual reviews including the names of the reviewers, and the panel summary assessment including the names of the panel members.



Numerical rating

The consistency between the numerical rating and the written comments is particularly important. The rating scale ranges from 6 (outstanding) to 1 (insufficient).

Rating scale	Description
6 (outstanding)	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
5 (excellent)	Is very good in international comparison – contains no significant elements to be improved
4 (good)*	Is in general sound but contains some elements that should be improved
3 (fair)*	Is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved
2 (poor)*	Contains flaws and needs substantial modification or improvement
1 (insufficient)*	Contains severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed project or the application

* Below threshold for panel discussion if all individual overall ratings are below 5.

3.2. Individual review

Each application is assigned to at least two individual reviewers. Reviewers write individual reviews, using specified sections in the review forms, and give subratings and overall ratings to the applications. Applications given an overall rating of 5 or 6 from at least one reviewer will continue to the panel review phase. The other applications will continue directly to decision-making. Therefore, the deadline for submitting the individual review reports is strict. It supports the preparation of the panel meeting following the individual review phase. The individual review reports will be given to the applicants as is, including the names of the reviewers.

3.3. Review panel meeting (online)

The panel members have access to all applications submitted to the panel, with exceptions in the case of conflicts of interest (see [RCF review principles](#)). Also, individual reviews for applications continuing to the panel review phase will be made available to all panel members at the latest one week before the meeting. However, please note that these review reports will



only be made available to panel members once all review reports have been submitted to the RCF.

At the panel meeting, the panel discusses applications that have reached the panel review phase. The individual reviewers appointed to the application will present their opinion on the application, and, typically, a third panel member (read-only/reader) may be assigned to read the application to form an additional, more general view of it. The review panel's summary assessment will be written for each application during the panel meeting by a dedicated summariser (a panel member). The summary is based on the discussions and the individual reviews. The panel decides the final overall rating for each application. When the final overall rating is 5 or 6, the panel will also decide subratings for specified review criteria. To complete the review, the panel is asked to rank the applications rated 5 or 6 within each funding instrument. The applications are ranked based on the review criteria used and the instrument-specific objectives listed in the review forms - no additional criteria will be used.

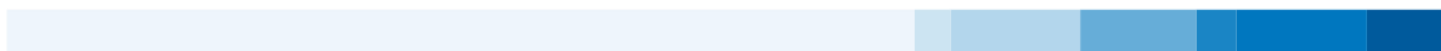
3.4. How to review applications in the online services

Please use the [RCF online services](#) (link takes you to the online services via our website) to review applications. You can find the review instructions and offline versions of all our review forms under [Guidelines and forms for reviewers](#) on our website. Both the individual reviews and the panel's summary assessments are completed in the online services. You can access the research plan and other sections in the application form directly from the review form questions. However, we do expect you to read the whole application.

4. Expert remuneration

There will be a modest compensation for participation, EUR 460 (EUR 600 for panel chair) per panel meeting day (taxed as per your national taxation rules). The compensation also covers participation in a short pre-meeting, if it is arranged. Furthermore, EUR 75 (EUR 100 in the case of consortium applications) will be paid for each individual review.

To claim your remuneration, please enter your own personal banking details in the online services (Bank Details Tab). The money will be paid into your personal bank account. Please notice that IBAN is mandatory for bank accounts in Europe. Also fill in the BIC/SWIFT code/clearing code/routing number.





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Make sure that you have entered your personal details correctly in the online services to avoid any unnecessary delays in the payment. The payslip will be sent to your home address.

