

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWER FOR EVALUATING SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

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1 THE FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The aim of the Academy of Finland's flagship programme is to pool together expertise from different fields in Finland to form high-level research and impact clusters that will further contribute to increasing the quality and impact of Finnish research.

The Flagship programme call follows a review process that takes about 5 months in total. First we will have **external peer-reviews of the proposals, aiming four reviews for scientific excellence and four for impact in support of economic growth and/or society**. After external reviews the Flagship Programme Subcommittee nominated by the Board of the Academy will select the proposals for the evaluation panels. There will be evaluation panels for both scientific excellence and impact. After panel evaluation, the Subcommittee selects the proposals nominated for Flagship status and funding. Selection is based on thorough international peer review of the proposals and the aims of the Flagship Programme.

A flagship is an effective mix of cutting-edge research, impact in support of economic growth and/or society, close connections to the business sector and society at large, adaptability, and a strong commitment from host organisations. Flagships are high-quality, high-impact competence clusters that work in flexible ways, simultaneously running several projects and other activities. During the flagship term, the clusters will make significant progress and make good use of the flagship funding to systematically improve and expand their activities.

The funding earmarked for the flagship programme comes to a total 50 million euros in years 2018 and 2019, out of which 31,5 million euros is reserved for this second flagship call.

The funding may be applied for by universities or government research institutes, or by consortia formed by such organisations. The flagships to be funded will be selected based on both scientific excellence and major impact

The host organisations of the flagships must be prepared to make a significant, steadily increasing investment in supporting the flagships. In addition, flagships are required to have secured a significant amount of national and international funding; their activities can also be supported by funds received from companies, the public sector or non-profit organisations.



The Flagship term is eight years. The funding is granted first for four years and then, after a scientific mid-term evaluation, for last four years. Based on the mid-term evaluation during the third year, the funding level may decrease, stay the same, increase or be terminated. The funding may be used for any category of project costs.

More information on the Academy's Flagship programmes is available at <https://www.aka.fi/en/research-and-science-policy/flagship-programme/>.

2 PROPOSAL, EVALUATION AND RATING

The research and impact plan must not exceed 30 pages and is written in English. The plan should describe the research and impact of the candidate flagship from 2015–2018 and outline the research and impact activities for 2019–2026. **The reviewers of scientific excellence will focus on items 1–5 and 7 in the proposal**, and the reviewers of impact on items 1–4 and 6–7.

There are **four main chapters** in the evaluation form of the Flagship proposals. Chapter 2 is divided into sub-questions (see evaluation form). Please note that Flagship proposals are multidisciplinary and covers a broad areas of science.

- 1 Demonstrated scientific excellence
- 2 Plan for promoting scientific excellence
- 3 Ecosystem and organisation of candidate flagship
- 4 Overall assessment

The reviewer's written comments in each of the questions in the evaluation form need not be lengthy. We invite reviewers to

- give evaluative comments rather than long descriptions
- write comments also under each sub-question
- write coherent phrases that can be used, if agreed, as such in the final panel review.

The consistency between the numerical rating and the written comments is particularly important. Please rate the proposal using this scale:

<p>6 = outstanding: Demonstrates exceptional novelty and innovative approaches. Potential to substantially advance science at global level. High gain that can include risks.</p> <p>5 = excellent: Extremely good in international comparison – no significant elements to be improved.</p> <p>4 = very good: In general sound, but contains a few elements that could be improved.</p> <p>3 = good: In general sound, but contains important elements that should be improved.</p> <p>2 = fair: Contains flaws. In need of substantial modification or improvement.</p> <p>1 = poor: Severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed plan.</p>
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Please give a final rating and an overall assessment for the proposal including lists of **strengths** and **weaknesses** as well as any additional comments. The final rating does not have to be a mathematical average of the sub-ratings.

Open Science

The Academy is committed to promoting the practices outlined in Finland's national Open Science and Research Roadmap 2014–2017. Openness improves the overall quality and impact of research and is part of the good scientific practice. The Academy requires that their funded projects commit to open access publishing and open their research data and methods for further use. For research data there can be varying degrees of openness





ranging from open access to strictly confidential due to research ethics and law. The experts are asked to give their view on the planned open science activities under review item good scientific practices.

3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS

In Finland, according to the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999), research plans, abstracts, progress reports and reviews are confidential documents. Proposal documents should therefore 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. The guidelines also apply to the process of reviewing funding proposals, research programmes and scientific disciplines. 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 is conducted in accordance with general stipulations about conflict of interest. Prior notice to ensure no conflicts of interest exist is required if a reviewer has economic or other affiliations or significantly different schools of thought in relation to the applicant under review.

As a reviewer, you are not allowed to disclose any information concerning proposal documents or evaluations to outsiders, nor are you allowed to use this confidential 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 proposal or reviews, please advise them to contact the Academy of Finland.

Reviewers are guilty of research misconduct if they misappropriate research ideas from proposals. 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.

Disclosing the contents of research plans to third parties or contacting applicants personally without explicit agreement to do so are also regarded as instances of inappropriate behavior on the part of reviewers.

Once the review has been completed, you are required to destroy all proposal documents and any copies made of them, or return them to the Academy. Confidentiality must also be maintained after the review process has been completed. The applicants will have access to the review on their own proposal after the funding decisions have been made.

After the funding decisions have been made, the Academy of Finland will publish a list of names, titles and institutions of all individual reviewers and panel members used in the call. In addition, the applicant will see the name of the reviewer in the review report on their own proposal (Act on the Openness of Government Activities).

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As a reviewer you are required to declare any personal interests according to the criteria below. You must disqualify yourself if you can in any way benefit from the approval or rejection of the proposal. You must also disqualify yourself in the following circumstances:

- You have collaboration with the applicant (e.g. you have co-authored and published an article or manuscript with the applicant in the past three years; you have been involved in the preparation of the proposal; or you are involved in the publication or proposal of the results).
- You have been a superior, subordinate or instructor of the applicant in the past three years.
- You are currently applying for the same post as the applicant.



- You are currently applying for funding from the Academy from the same funding instrument.
- The applicant is a close person to you. A close person is:
 - a) your spouse (also *de facto*), child, grandchild, sibling, parent, grandparent or a person otherwise close to you (e.g. fiancé/e or a close friend), as well as their spouses (also *de facto*)
 - b) a sibling of your parent or his/her spouse (also *de facto*), a child of your sibling, or your previous spouse (also *de facto*)
 - c) a child, grandchild, sibling, parent or grandparent of your spouse as well as their spouses (also *de facto*), or a child of a sibling of your spouse
 - d) or a half-relative comparable to the above-mentioned persons.

You are also disqualified if your impartiality may be endangered in any other way, or if you feel that you have a conflict of interest and are therefore disqualified to review the proposal.

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

5 DECLARATION FOR THE REVIEWER TO ACCEPT

Please acknowledge that by accepting the task of a reviewer you guarantee not to disclose the information you receive as reviewer and not to use it for anybody's benefit or disadvantage as stipulated in section 3 above (Confidentiality). Further, you affirm that you will immediately notify the Academy if you have a conflict of interest in one or more proposals.

6 ROLE OF EXPERTS AND THE ACADEMY OF FINLAND

The Academy of Finland grants funding to the best researchers and research teams as well as to the most promising junior researchers through several funding instruments. Experts are invited to review the scientific excellence of the submitted research proposals. In most cases, the reviews are finalised in expert panel meetings.

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