



Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

International Common Application Process: Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

In order to facilitate international collaborative research, the ESRC (United Kingdom), NWO (Netherlands), DfG (Germany), FWF (Austria) and IRCHSS (Ireland) have agreed upon an explicit common set of submission guidelines, peer review criteria, and processing arrangements for international collaborative research proposals. This International Common Application Process (ICAP) applies to all research proposals submitted for bilateral joint funding between the ESRC and one of the other agencies listed above. The ICAP does not currently allow for collaborative submissions including more than two countries, or which do not include the ESRC, but this may become possible in the near future.

Specific guidance for bilateral between ESRC and NWO (Netherlands) and between ESRC and FWF (Austria)

In cases where ESRC and the partner funding agency have agreed to follow a 'Lead Agency' procedure (NWO, FWF and IRCHSS), only one joint application is submitted to one of the two partner agencies (the 'lead' agency). Applications are processed according to the normal procedures of the lead agency, with input provided by the partner agency into the peer review and assessment process. For proposals submitted in 2009 under the bilateral joint funding schemes between ESRC and NWO (Netherlands) and between ESRC and FWF (Austria), ESRC is the lead agency. Applicants have been asked to produce a single, joint application form describing the proposed research project. Applications are submitted only to the ESRC, using ESRC's normal application forms, and are processed according to normal ESRC procedures for Small or Standard Grants. Under ICAP, the partner agencies have agreed a common set of criteria which should be addressed. These are listed below. These criteria were communicated to the applicants along with the call for proposals. Your written review should also address each of these criteria, as appropriate. The peer review process is conducted by the ESRC with input on the selection of reviewers from NWO and FWF. Therefore, please write your review in English.

Specific guidance for bilateral between ESRC and DfG (Germany)

In the case of the bilateral joint funding scheme between ESRC and DfG (Germany), which does not operate under lead agency procedures, the applicants have submitted a proposal to both agencies, using the normal national application

forms for each agency. Each application document includes a common proposal text describing the proposed research project. Under ICAP, the partner agencies have agreed a common set of criteria which should be addressed. These are listed below. These criteria were communicated to the applicants along with the call for proposals. Your written review should also address each of these criteria, as appropriate.

The peer review process is conducted jointly by the two agencies. Each agency selects and approaches a number of reviewers (usually one or two) for their comments. These reviews are then shared between both agencies in reaching a final funding decision. Therefore, please write your review in English.

As the substantive text of each proposal document is the same, you should be able to assess the proposal based only on the proposal form for the national agency which has contacted you requesting a review. For your reference, however, the proposals submitted to both agencies have been sent to you.

Assessment Criteria

The collaborative research proposal should be assessed on the following eight criteria, which should have been explicitly addressed in the joint proposal document.

1. Theoretical and Methodological Context

The application must be well-founded on appropriate theory and methodology, and this underpinning should be clear in the introduction to the application.

2. Research Outcomes

The research should be capable of and designed to make a clear and significant contribution to new knowledge. Interdisciplinary proposals are welcomed, though it is acknowledged that significant innovative research may also be conducted within the framework of a single discipline. Proposals that may be considered high-risk, in terms of advancing highly innovative theories or methods that may be unproven, and/or exploiting new types of evidence, are welcome. Risky proposals should clearly justify the risk by highlighting the potential outcomes.

3. Research Design

The research design should be clear and capable of delivering the outcomes sought. The framework for collecting the research data and materials, the analytical framework of the research, and the reasons for proposing these should be clear and sound in the application. Proposed analytical methods should be reasonably fully set out.

4. Qualifications of the Applicants

The qualifications and competencies of the participating researchers to conduct the research should be clear. Relevant preliminary work and related previous publications should be of high quality.

5. Feasibility of the Research

The research should be clearly demonstrated as logistically feasible in terms of both reasonable access being assured to any necessary data, research materials and infrastructure, and the resource plan and funding request for these, including the staffing requirement proposed, being reasonable to meet them.

6. Outcomes and Impact

The potential outcomes and impact of the research should be clearly set out and appropriate, including publications. Where appropriate, the proposal should include clear plans for knowledge transfer and ongoing engagement with relevant policy and professional communities in the research area.

7. Value for Money

The research should be good value for money. The potential outcomes in new knowledge and contribution to policy and practice, as appropriate, should be clearly identifiable and well worth the necessary resources required to carry out the research.

8. Value of the Collaboration

The proposal should clearly explain why the proposed international collaboration is required in order to produce the research outputs. Mechanisms for communication and networking among collaborators should be clear and appropriate.

Assessment Grade

In addition to providing a written review, you are invited to indicate your overall judgment of the research proposal using the following definitions:

- ALPHA +** The application is outstanding in terms of its potential scientific merit. It is extremely likely to make a significant contribution to knowledge and the development of the research area. An Alpha + proposal is clearly worthy of funding without reservation.
- ALPHA** The application is important as it has considerable potential merit, but does not warrant an A+ rating. Alpha proposals are worthy of funding, but in fierce competition may not merit being placed in the highest ranking.
- ALPHA -** The application has significant potential scientific merit but is not of a consistently high quality. Alpha – proposals are generally worthy of funding, but with some reservations.
- BETA** A Beta grade should be awarded to a proposal which will add to understanding and is worthy of support, but is of lesser quality or urgency than an alpha-rated proposal. Such proposals are unlikely to have a significant influence on the development of the research area.
- REJECT** A Reject grade should be awarded to a proposal which is flawed in its scientific approach, or is repetitious of other work, or otherwise judged not worth pursuing; or which, though possibly having sound objectives, appears seriously defective in its methodology.