Peer review handbook

Medicine and health 2020

Swedish Research Council
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Foreword

Welcome as an expert reviewer for the Swedish Research Council’s peer review process in Medicine and Health for 2020 and our calls for project grants, starting grants and grants for half-time position in clinical research. Your assignment as a member of one of our review panels is an important position of trust and the evaluation of research applications constitutes the foundation for the work of the Swedish Research Council. Your work is very important and I hope you realize how much we and all the scientists that are applying for funding this year appreciate your efforts.

This handbook has been written to assist you in your forthcoming work and describes the review process step by step. The purpose is to make it easy to find the information that is relevant for the tasks to be carried out. It contains important practical instructions on the grading of applications as well as how the final statements for the applicants shall be written. In addition, you can find information on the Swedish Research Council’s general guidelines and on our conflict of interest policy and gender equality strategy.

Please read both the instructions and the appendices carefully, so that you are well prepared for your review work.

The work of scrutinising applications constitutes the foundation for the work of the Swedish Research Council, and your assignment as a member of one of our review panels is an important position of trust. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to welcome you as an expert reviewer for the Swedish Research Council.

Jan-Ingvar Jönsson
Secretary General, Medicine and health
Introduction

This handbook is designed to reflect the review process step by step. The intention is to make it easier for you as a panel member to find the information you need to carry out all tasks during each step. At the end of each section, there is a summary of the tasks to be carried out, and, if applicable, the date by which each task must be completed. Chapter 6 contains a summary in form of a checklist of the various tasks you have to complete during the different stages of the process.

The major call in Medicine and Health 2020 contains four separate calls:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Reviewed by panel*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Grant</td>
<td>MH-01A through 14B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Grant – Development of methods to replace, reduce and refine animal experiments (3R)</td>
<td>MH-3R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Grant</td>
<td>MH-01A through 14B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant for Half-time Position in Clinical Research Environment</td>
<td>MH-01A through 14B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The review panels are listed on page 10 to 11 and in Appendix 9. Clicking on any of the grants listed above will bring up the call text. You can also find the call text on the bulletin board in Prisma.

In this first section of the handbook, you will find information on some starting points and the principles that permeate the entire review work, as well as a brief description of the various roles used in the process.

News this year

In 2019, the Scientific Council for medicine and health decided to adjust the role of the chair and vice chair within the review process and extended their mandates. From this year, the chairs and vice chairs will be actively involved in the recruitment process of the review panel as well as in the allocation of the applications between reviewers. In order to allow the chair to focus on leading the review process, he or she will not review any application him-/herself, but read all applications of the panel. A supplement to this handbook, made available to all chairs and vice chairs, describes their mandates in detail.

Following the individual review period, the Swedish Research Council personnel proposes a list of applications that should be sifted and not to be discussed at the panel meeting. This list will then be sent to the chair and vice chair for comments and, once approved, forwarded to the remaining panel members.
For the sifted applications, the personnel proposes subsidiary grades and an overall grade of 4 or less. From this year, the subsidiary grades will be part of the statement for the sifted applications and therefore be discussed in more detail during the panel meeting.

General starting points and principles
There are certain guidelines and principles which apply during all steps in the review work, and which are important for you to know about as a reviewer.

Peer review
The instructions to the Swedish Research Council establishes that “the Swedish Research Council shall give support to basic research of the highest scientific quality within all fields of science”. The fundamental principle for assessing scientific quality is the peer review process of applications for research grants that is carried out by the various review panels within each subject area.

In order to provide a basis for the scientific review, the board of the Research Council has formulated guidelines for peer review process based on eight principles (see Appendix 1). Some guidelines have already been implemented, while some will be implemented in the future.

Conflict of interest
A process involving peer review means that the evaluation of applications is executed by researchers who are themselves part of the collective of researchers applying for grants. This creates a particular risk for conflicts of interest. In order to avoid any situation involving a conflict of interest, the Swedish Research Council has established strict internal guidelines (see Appendix 2, the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy).

Anyone who has a conflict of interest may not attend the meeting while that very application is discussed and should not participate in the handling, assessment or discussion of the application or the applicant during any part of the process. In order to prevent the occurrence of such situations and to maintain public confidence, the Swedish Research Council has decided that an application in which a member of the review panel is the applicant or a participating researcher should not be reviewed in the member's review panel. The same applies to an application in which a third party, who is related to a member of the review panel but not necessarily a participating researcher, is involved.

As a panel member, you are obliged to report any conflict of interest in relation to the applications you will be reviewing. In case of doubt, please confer with the chair of your panel and the Swedish Research Council personnel. Ultimately, the responsibility lies with the Swedish Research Council. In case a conflict of interest arises, another reviewer will be appointed.

Gender equality
The Swedish Research Council shall promote gender equality within its area of activities. For this reason, the Swedish Research Council’s board has decided on a gender equality strategy (see Appendix 3). One of the operational goals for the gender equality strategy is to “ensure that women and men have the same success rates and receive the same average grant amount, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant”. Against this background, before adopting its proposal for allocation of grants, review panels shall take into account the gender equality goal and work out the success rate in its proposal, as well as considering and, if necessary, commenting on the outcome.

Confidentiality
Throughout the review process, applications and the review of applications shall be treated confidentially. You must not spread documents that you have access to as a panel member, and you must delete them after the assignment has been completed. Nor shall any third party be informed of what was discussed at the meeting, or of the views of any reviewer in the ongoing review process. All communications between the
applicants and the Swedish Research Council concerning the review process or the grounds on which
decisions are made shall be carried out via the responsible research officer.

**Rejecting applications on formal grounds**
An application may be rejected on formal grounds. This entails rejection from further evaluation without
being assessed for quality or even graded. When this happens, the application is no longer shown in Prisma.
Rejection of an application on formal grounds requires a decision by the Swedish Research Council. The
Scientific Council or a review panel cannot decide to reject an application on formal grounds. However, if,
during an assessment, a reviewer identifies a reason for an application to be rejected on formal grounds, he
or she is responsible for informing the review panel’s research officer. The research officer then takes over
the responsibility for the matter.

**Prisma**
All the review work is carried out in the web-based system Prisma. In order to carry out the review work in
Prisma, you must register as a user in the system – further information on this is available in the Prisma
User Manual. If you have any questions concerning the system and cannot find the answer in the Prisma
User Manual, please contact the responsible research officer.

**Roles in the review process**

**Chair and vice chair**
The role of the chair is to lead and coordinate the work of the panel, and to ensure, in collaboration with the
Swedish Research Council personnel, that rules and policies are being followed. The chair allocates
applications between reviewers, and is responsible for identifying any need for external reviewers. The
chair is also responsible for ensuring that the final statements issued by the review panel reflect the panel’s
discussion and assessments. The chair does not review any application her-/himself, but shall read all
applications reviewed by the panel.

The vice chair is appointed by the chair of the panel, in consultation with the Swedish Research Council
personnel.

In addition to supporting the chair actively throughout the entire review process, the vice chair’s task is
to substitute the chair of the review panel in situations where she or he cannot or should not take part, such
as when the chair has a conflict of interest.

**Panel member**
The tasks of panel members are to review, grade and rank the applications received by the review panel.
The review panel shall also discuss applications during the review panel meeting, and give feedback to
applicants whose applications have been discussed.

**Observer**
An observer may be appointed to a review panel by the scientific council. The observer acts as a link to the
scientific council and fills an important role, together with the Swedish Research Council personnel, in
upholding the quality of the review process. Observers provide feedback to the scientific council and the
Secretary General after each review period, but do not themselves take part in the review process.

**Swedish Research Council personnel**
In addition to their roles as administrators for the review panel, the research officer and senior research
officer ensure that the rules and procedures established for the process are being followed, and they
communicate the board’s guidelines and policies for the review process. The Swedish Research Council
personnel does not participate in the review work.
**Secretary General**

The Secretary General has overall responsibility for the review process and for all questions of scientific nature. The Secretary General is also the person who deals with any complaints following the grant decision.

**Checklist**

Below you find a summary of the various tasks during the different stages of the process:
Call and preparation

- State bank account information in Prisma.
- Book travel to the workshop for reviewers.
- Book travel to the review panel meeting.
- Report any conflict of interest.

Review

- Grade and write detailed comments (preliminary statement) on all applications for which you are the rapporteur.
- Grade and write comments (assessment) on all applications for which you are a reviewer.
- Rank all applications allocated to you (as rapporteur or reviewer).
- Prepare for the meeting by reading other panel members’ comments, and by preparing a brief presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the application for which you are the rapporteur.
- Check the list of sifted applications on the bulletin board in Prisma to decide whether any of these applications should be brought up for discussion at the meeting.
- Read those applications remaining after sifting that you have not already reviewed.
- Please contact the Swedish Research Council personnel and the chair if you discover during the review that you do, after all, have a conflict of interest with any of the applications you are to review, or if you discover any problem with an application.
- Contact the Swedish Research Council immediately if you suspect any divergence from ethical guidelines or good research practice, or any scientific misconduct.

Review panel meeting

- Agree on subsidiary grades and an overall grade for each application discussed.
- Agree on a proposal for applications to be awarded funding within the review panel’s budgetary framework.
- Agree on a priority list with reserves.
- Contribute with feedback on the review process.

Final statement

- Write the review panel’s final statement in Prisma on the applications for which you have been the rapporteur. The final statement shall be submitted to Prisma no later than one week after the review panel meeting (refer to Prisma for the exact date).
- If necessary, supplement final statements by the chair.
- Submit receipts for any expenses to the panel’s responsible research officer.

Decision and follow-up

- Refer questions on the evaluation of individual applications to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel.
- Be prepared to assist the chair and the responsible Secretary General in case of questions.
1. Call and preparation

The first period covers everything that occurs before the panel members start the reviewing process. The panel members are recruited, the call is formulated and published, the review panel meeting is planned etc.

Creating an account in Prisma

During this step, you as a panel member must log on to Prisma (or create an account if you do not already have one), and ensure that the account and personal contact details is correct. It is important that your personal contact details are up-to-date, so that the Swedish Research Council personnel and the panel chair can contact you easily. Throughout the review process, you will receive instructions via email. You must also decide whether you want to receive remuneration for your review work. Ensure that you have filled in the correct payment information under the tab Review. There are detailed instructions on how to do this in the Prisma User Manual.

Allocation of applications to review panels

Once the call is closed, the applications are checked and allocated to the various review panels. Usually, each application is allocated to the panel the applicant has listed as the first choice. However, if the chair considers that an application should be reviewed by another panel, it might be moved.

Reporting any conflict of interest

When the applications allocated to your review panel have become available in Prisma, you must report your conflicts of interest as soon as possible. This is done in Prisma. Only when all panel members have reported their conflicts of interest, the chair can allocate applications to individual members. You need to inform the panel chair or the Swedish Research council personnel in case of a suspected conflict of interest, doubts on your competency to review a specific application or similar. If you discover a conflict of interest later on during the process, you must report this to the panel chair and the responsible research officer.

Allocation of applications to reviewers

Each application is allocated to five reviewers, one of them being the rapporteur. The rapporteur is the reviewer who is responsible for presenting the application for discussion at the meeting, and for summarising the review panel’s final statement following the meeting.

Planning and preparation ahead of the workshop for reviewers

Once you have received information of the date of the meeting, you need to book your travel to the meeting, and provide information about your needs for accommodation and any dietary requirements. The travel is booked via the Swedish Research Council’s travel agent. Please see the bulletin board in Prisma for information about the Swedish Research Council’s travel policy. It is important that your contact details are up-to-date, so that the Swedish Research Council personnel and the panel chair can contact you. Throughout the review process, you will receive instructions via email on the various steps of the review work.
Planning and preparation ahead of the review panel meeting

The date of the meetings are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Code</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01A</td>
<td>Molecular medicine</td>
<td>14 - 15 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>basic disease mechanisms, cell- and molecular biology, biochemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and genetics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01B</td>
<td>Molecular medicine</td>
<td>14 - 15 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>basic disease mechanisms, cell- and molecular biology, bioinformatics, systems medicine and genomics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Molecular medicine and therapy</td>
<td>14 - 15 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>basic disease mechanisms, biomaterials, biotechnology, pharmacology,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pharmacy, toxicology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03A</td>
<td>Immunity and inflammation</td>
<td>2 - 3 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immunity, inflammation, autoimmunity and transplantation and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03B</td>
<td>Immunity and inflammation</td>
<td>2 - 3 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immunity, inflammation, allergy, dermatology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04A</td>
<td>Infection</td>
<td>2 - 3 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>infection, primarily within bacteriology and mycology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04B</td>
<td>Infection</td>
<td>2 - 3 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>infection, primarily within virology and parasitology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Circulation and respiration</td>
<td>2 - 3 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cardiology, clinical physiology, vascular biology, pulmonology, nephrology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Surgical disciplines</td>
<td>26 - 27 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anaesthesiology, intensive care, surgery, odontology, medical imaging,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orthopedic surgery, radiology, urology and related research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Women's and children's health</td>
<td>26 - 27 August 2020</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Dates</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>08A</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>14 - 15 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08B</td>
<td>Cancer and hematology</td>
<td>14 - 15 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Endocrinology, gastroenterology and metabolism</td>
<td>7 - 8 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Neurosciences</td>
<td>7 - 8 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Neurology and sensory organs</td>
<td>7 - 8 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>7 - 8 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Health care sciences</td>
<td>26 - 27 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14A</td>
<td>Public health sciences</td>
<td>26 - 27 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14B</td>
<td>Public health sciences</td>
<td>26 - 27 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3R</td>
<td>Replace, reduce and refine animal experiments</td>
<td>23 - 24 September 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You also need to book your travel to the panel meeting, and provide information about your needs for accommodation and any dietary requests. The travel is booked via the Swedish Research Council’s travel agent. Please see the bulletin board in Prisma for information on the Swedish Research Council’s procedures and travel policy.

Summary of your tasks

- State bank account information in Prisma
- Book travel to the workshop for reviewers
- Book travel to the review panel meeting
- Report any conflict of interest
2. Review

The review period lasts from the time you get access to the applications to be reviewed by you in Prisma, until approximately 10–14 days before the review panel meeting. During this period, you shall read all applications allocated to you, write evaluations (assessment or preliminary statement), grade and rank the applications reviewed by you. Thereafter, Prisma is closed for editing, at the same time as the system opens for reading. You as a panel member can now prepare yourself for the discussions held at the review panel meeting by reading the evaluations of the other reviewers. During this stage, a first sifting of the applications is also carried out by the chair and the vice chair.

Individual review

Each application shall be reviewed and graded by at least five members of the review panel: one rapporteur and four reviewers. For the applications which you are the rapporteur for, you shall write a preliminary statement, which shall consist of a numerical grade and detailed written comments on all evaluation criteria where strengths and weaknesses of the project are pointed out. In the role as reviewer, you write an assessment, which also consists of a numerical grade and written comments. This work is carried out in Prisma.

Your review shall be based on the application’s contents. Information that is irrelevant to the review should not be considered. Irrelevant information can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from expertise in the field. Examples of irrelevant information are details of the applicant’s private life, various types of rumour, such as lack of research ethics or assumptions that someone else might have written the application.

The starting point for the evaluation is that the content of an application and the information about the applicant shall not be shared with others during the review process. Sometimes the question arises whether it is acceptable to consult with a colleague on certain parts of the content of a research plan. This may be justified as long as the application is not shared with third parties, and the consultation is limited to specific questions, such as the use of statistics or new research findings. It is your task as a reviewer to assess the application in its entirety.

You must contact the Swedish Research Council immediately if you suspect any deviation from ethical guidelines or good research practice, or if you suspect scientific misconduct. The Swedish Research Council will ensure that the matter is further investigated.

Evaluation criteria and grading scales

Your review shall be based on four evaluation criteria – the scientific quality, novelty and originality of the proposed research, the merits of the applicant and the feasibility of the project. These four criteria are the Swedish Research Council’s basic criteria for evaluating the overall quality of the application. The criteria are evaluated against a seven- or three-point grading scale (as detailed below), and are intended to reflect the application’s “quality profile”. To facilitate the application of the various criteria, there are also a number of guiding questions to be considered in the evaluation work.

Please observe that the grading scale is an ordinal scale, where it is not possible to specify differences or distances between the values.

As of 2019, the assessment of the application’s scientific quality includes assessing how sex and gender perspectives are considered in the research, if relevant. The applicants are requested to declare whether sex
and gender perspectives are relevant to the research (Yes or No) and, if so, in what way they will be applied.

To include sex and gender perspectives in research can concern anything from including and analysing both women and men in the study material (sex perspective) to applying a problematising and reflecting attitude to how gender affiliations are created and understood (gender perspective). Please observe that a gender perspective in the content of the research should not be confused with an even distribution of women and men in the research team or gender equality in assessment of applications.

Guiding questions

**The scientific quality of the proposed research**
- Will the project, if successful, significantly advance our understanding of the field?
- Is the research proposal relevant for medical research and the definition of the problems and proposed solutions clear and compelling?
- Do the study design, research questions and hypotheses meet the standard of the highest scientific quality?
- Are the hypotheses clearly defined and based on the appropriate literature and/or preliminary data?
- Are potential problems and alternative strategies identified and presented?
- Are there relevant scientific collaborations?
- Are methods, including data analysis and statistics, appropriate for the project and well described?
- Are the ethical considerations for the proposed project described and addressed properly?
- If sex and gender is described as relevant to the research project, has the applicant considered sex and gender in the description of the proposed work, for instance as part of preliminary data, the choice of samples or study population, or data analyses?

**Especially for Starting grants:**
- Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to formulate scientific questions that are clearly independent of the research the applicant performed as a doctoral student and postdoc, and the research of former advisors?

**Especially for 3R:**
- Is the project significant to the development of methods to replace, reduce and/or refine animal experiments?

**Novelty and originality**
- Does the project extend or challenge current understanding, opinion or practice in its field?
- Is the project built on a unique combination of ideas, preliminary data, and different methodologies to create novel approaches to address the question at hand?
- Is there potential for creation of new knowledge, novel technologies, or new directions for research and advancement of the field?
- Will completion of the aims improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice?
- Does the researcher propose a line of research that has the potential to significantly advance current knowledge in the field or is he/she simply adding details to existing knowledge?

**Merits of the applicant**
- Does the applicant have sufficient research experience, expertise, level of independence and scientific network for implementation of the proposed project?
- How do the applicant’s academic qualifications and achievements relate to his or her career stage and active time for research?
- Does the applicant have a documented independent line of investigation?
• Does the publication record suggest a coherent line of investigation? Does the applicant report publications as senior author? Focus is on the most relevant and important publications and reports, with emphasis on quality rather than quantity.

**Especially for Starting grants:**

• Has the applicant shown the ability to work independently of former advisors?
• Has the applicant shown the ability to work in new (international) research environments, for instance during postdoctoral work?

A seven-point grading scale is used to evaluate the criteria the scientific quality of the project, novelty and originality, and the merits of the applicant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Exceptionally strong application with negligible weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very strong application with negligible weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good to excellent</td>
<td>Very strong application with minor weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Strong application with minor weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Some strengths, but also moderate weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>A few strengths, but also at least one major weakness or several minor weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Very few strengths, and numerous major weaknesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feasibility**

• Considering the project as a whole, including participating researchers, does the applicant or project group have sufficient competence for completion of the project?
• Is the project leader’s level of activity within the project sufficient with regard to the proposed research plan?
• Is the general design, including the time-frame, realistic for implementing the proposed project?
• Are the materials, methods (including statistics and/or power calculations), experimental models, and when appropriate patient/study cohorts adequate and well adapted to the hypothesis or research question?

A three-point grading scale is used:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feasible</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partly feasible</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not feasible</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all criteria, you can choose “insufficient” if you cannot provide a reasonable evaluation for that criterion.

**Overall grade**

Finally, you shall weigh together the various subsidiary criteria into an overall grade according to the seven-point grading scale above. The overall grade is not the same as an average grade or a summary of the subsidiary evaluations; instead, it shall reflect the scientific quality of the application as a whole. It is not a condition that the quality concept covers all aspects of the various criteria, nor that they have the same relative weight for all applications. In normal cases, however, a strongly positive evaluation of only one criterion cannot outweigh other weaknesses of an application when weighed together.

For project grants and starting grants, “scientific quality” should be given more weight in the overall grade. In contrast, for grants for half-time positions in clinical research, “merits of applicant” should be given more weight in the overall grade.

**Additional assessment criterion used in the 3R review panel**

The additional criterion of “relevance” is used by the 3R review panel for applications related to the development of methods for replacing, reducing and/or refining animal experiments. The seven-point grading scale shall be used for this criterion. The “relevance” criterion must not be weighed into the overall grade. Instead, it is to be weighed into an application’s ranking in relation to others. Thus, an application can be of high relevance, but low scientific quality (or vice versa). The following additional guiding questions have been adapted for use in the 3R review panel:

**Relevance:**

- Is this a strategically important 3Rs area?
- Will the proposal replace/reduce animal use by a significant number of animals?
- Will the proposal refine a severe/moderate procedure (even if the number of animals affected is low) OR refine a mild procedure where animal numbers are high?
- Could the outcomes be applicable to other models/research areas?

**Ranking of applications**

You shall also rank each application against all the other applications you have reviewed within the specific type of grant. This is also done in Prisma. The ranking shall be a supplement to the grading result when the review panel’s applications are compared with each other. You must rank all the applications you have been allocated (both those for which you are the rapporteur, and those for which you are a reviewer).

Ahead of the review panel meeting, all individual rankings of all the reviewers are weighed together into a preliminary joint ranking for each application. For more detailed instructions, please refer to the Prisma User Manual.

It is very important to complete the ranking in time as some of the applications will be sifted before the panel meeting. We recommend to rank the applications towards the end of your review work and not too early as it might happen that you are allocated further applications to review at a late stage (for instance, if a conflict of interest is discovered late during the process).
External reviewers
The panel chair shall identify applications that require external review and shall propose possible external reviewers. An external review may be appropriate if the scientific character of an application means that the joint competency of the review panel is not sufficient for a thorough review, or if the conflict of interest situation within the group makes an application difficult to evaluate. In normal cases, the responsible research officer at the Swedish Research Council will contact the external reviewers.

Sifting
In order to allow more time for discussing the applications that are considered to have a reasonable chance of being awarded funding, the Scientific Council has decided on a sifting process, during which the applications judged ‘not suitable’ for financing are screened out before the review panel meeting. Following the individual review period, the Swedish Research Council personnel proposes a list of applications that should be sifted and not to be discussed at the panel meeting. The proposal is based on the preliminary joint ranking for each application. The personnel identifies a breaking point in the list, where applications below have received such low rankings that chances for funding are considered negligible. A maximum of 50 per cent of the applications can be sifted. In this sifting recommendation, the personnel considers the gender distribution of the applicants. In addition, an application with large deviations between the reviewers’ grades will not be sifted. For the sifted applications, the personnel proposes subsidiary grades and an overall grade of 4 or less. Applications with an overall grade of 5 or higher cannot be sifted.

The proposed list of applications to be sifted will then be sent to the chair and vice chair for comments and discussed at a sifting meeting with the chair and vice chair. Once approved, it is made available to all panel members on the bulletin board in Prisma. Applications with large deviations between the reviewers will be brought to attention and only sifted if the review panel agree on a common decision. Thus, any panel member may suggest bringing a sifted application back into the process at any point. The sifted applications will, however, not be discussed at the panel meeting.

All reviewers read all applications remaining after sifting
In 2018, the Scientific Council of Medicine and Health decided that in order to enhance the discussion at the meeting all applications that have not been sifted should be read by all reviewers before the meeting (except in case of conflict of interest). After the sifting process is complete, you need to check for applications you have not previously read that are to be discussed at the meeting and read those. You should not submit any individual grading or ranking in Prisma for these applications, but note your grades and comments and bring them with you to the meeting.

Summary of your tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to be completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| □ Grade and write detailed comments (preliminary statement) on all applications for which you are the rapporteur | see deadline for your panel in Prisma  
| □ Grade and write comments (assessment) on all applications for which you are a reviewer | see deadline for your panel in Prisma  
| □ Rank all applications allocated to you (as rapporteur and reviewer) | see deadline for your panel in Prisma |
- Prepare for the meeting by reading other panel members’ comments and by preparing a short presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the applications, for which you are the rapporteur. before the meeting

- Check the list of the sifted applications on the bulletin board in Prisma to determine whether any of the screened-out applications should be brought up for discussion at the meeting before the meeting

- Read the applications remaining after sifting that you have not already reviewed. before the meeting

- Please contact the Swedish Research Council personnel and the panel chair if you, during your review process, discover that you have a conflict of interest with any of the applications you are reviewing, or if you discover any problem with an application. as soon as possible

- Immediately contact the Swedish Research Council if you suspect that there may be deviations from ethical guidelines or good research practice, or if you suspect misconduct. as soon as possible
3. Review panel meeting

At the review panel meeting, the applications are presented and discussed, using the grading and ranking done by you and the other panel members as the starting point. The review panel shall then work out a joint grade for the subsidiary criteria of each application, and an overall grade for scientific quality, and also draw up a priority list in which the panel lists the applications proposed for a grant award within the given budgetary framework, including a number of reserves. During the review panel meeting, panel members are also encouraged to provide feedback on the review process.

Sifted applications

After the chairs and vice chairs have approved the proposed list of applications to be sifted, the list will be made available to all panel members on the bulletin board in Prisma. Applications with large deviations between the reviewers will be brought to attention and only sifted if the review panel agree on a common decision. Thus, any panel member may suggest bringing a sifted application back into the process at any point.

Discussion of applications

The applications are discussed based on the individual review, taking into account the four different criteria used in the review. For each application, the chair leads the discussion. It starts with the rapporteur presenting his/her assessment focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the application, which is followed by the other reviewers presenting their assessments. Finally, all reviewers who have read the applications are asked for their input. The rapporteur is responsible for including any review from external reviewers. For each application, the panel shall agree on the grades for each criterion and on an overall grade. The rapporteur must take notes in order be able to finalize a comprehensive final statement.

The reviewer of an application should prepare for the discussion by reading the assessments and grades given by the other reviewers. As the meeting time is limited and all applications need to be discussed, it is important to find a balance in the time allocated to each application. The chair and the Swedish Research Council personnel will keep track of the time.

Occasionally questions are raised from panel members to the possibility to gain access to applications or assessments from previous years in order to compare progress and content of an application. However, it is important to stress that an application/applicant needs to receive a new assessment each time he/she applies to the Swedish Research Council. For that reason, the review panel will not have access to any previous applications or assessments.

If you discover any possible conflict of interest (your own or another’s) during the meeting, please bring this to attention to the chair and the Swedish Research Council personnel, and not in front of the entire panel.

Prioritisation or nomination of applications

Once all applications have been discussed, and the panel has agreed on an overall grade for each application, the panel shall, depending on grant type, identify the applications with the highest scientific quality.

The panel shall also identify applications, which qualify for possible additional funds within special initiatives, such as “infection and antibiotics”.
Research Project Grants:
The panel shall define a priority list containing the applications proposed for a grant award. The number of application in the priority list can be maximized to the numbers indicated by the estimated success rate, plus an additional 10 per cent.

Starting Grants:
Each panel can nominate up to 20 per cent of the starting grant applications within the panel to the second step of the evaluation, i.e. to the Starting grant panel. Nominated applications must have an overall grade of at least 5. The nominated applications should not be ranked. The starting grant panel then assesses each applicant’s “potential to be an outstanding young researcher” and gives recommendations on which applications to fund. This recommendation is the basis for the Scientific Council of Medicine and Health’s funding decision.

The panel shall also draw up a priority list with reserves, covering the applications that fall immediately outside the panel’s budgetary framework.

Grants for Half-time Position in Clinical Research Environment:
The panels nominate high quality applications to the second step of the evaluation, i.e. to the appointment panel. Nominated applications must be ranked. The appointment panel then recommends support for up to seven applications, one of which within the field of Infection and antibiotics. This recommendation is the basis for the Scientific Council of Medicine and Health’s funding decision. The panel shall also present a priority list with reserves.

Research Project Grant – Development of methods to replace, reduce and refine animal experiments (3R) and for Research Project Grant – Pharmaceuticals science:
The panel shall draw up a priority list in which the panel lists the applications proposed for a grant award within the given budgetary framework, including a number of reserves. This recommendation is the basis for the Scientific Council of Medicine and Health’s funding decision.

Special conditions
Gender equality shall be a special condition for prioritising applications of equivalent scientific quality. This means that in conjunction with the overall prioritisation, the review panel shall take into account the success rate of women and men, and if necessary prioritise applications from applicants of the under-represented gender when applications are judged to be of equivalent quality.

Feedback
In conjunction with the review panel meeting, the panel is encouraged to provide feedback on the review work and various aspects of the process. This is usually a concluding item on the meeting agenda.

Summary of the tasks of the review panel

- Agree on grades for each individual criterion and on an overall grade for each application.
- Agree on a priority list or nominations depending on grant type.
- Contribute with feedback on the review process.
4. Final statement

Following the review panel meeting, the panel’s final statement on the applications for which you have been the rapporteur remains to be written. It is then the task of the chair to check the final statements and to ensure they reflect the discussion by the review panel. As rapporteur, you may be asked to complement the final statement.

The rapporteur writes a final statement

The discussion at the review panel meeting forms the basis for the review panel’s final statement, which is the end product of the review process. The Swedish Research Council bases its funding decision on the review panel’s final statement, and the final statement is also sent to the applicant in conjunction with the grant decision being published. The final statement is therefore a central document, and it is important that the final statement corresponds to the grades, and describes objectively the main strengths and weaknesses of the application, and also includes any necessary clarification.

You are responsible for writing the final statements for all applications for which you have been the rapporteur. The preliminary statement you have submitted in Prisma ahead of the review panel meeting shall form the basis for the final statement. The preliminary statement shall, however, be modified to reflect the review panel’s joint overall evaluation of the application. You should therefore go back over your notes of what was discussed at the meeting, so that the final statement includes all opinions. As rapporteur, you usually have one week in which to submit your final statements in Prisma following the review panel meeting.

Write the statement for each grade as bullet points and use the headings “Strengths” and “Weaknesses”. The bullet points under these two headings should reflect the definition of the grade. For example, a high grade like 6 or 7 should have more strengths and fewer weaknesses. In contrary, a grade of 4 or 5 should have fewer strengths and more weaknesses.

Please note that you do not write a final statement for sifted applications as they will receive a standard final statement explaining the sifting process. These final statements are produced by the Swedish Research Council personnel.

The chair reviews all final statements

Once the final statements have been submitted in Prisma, the chair will, with help of the vice chair and the senior research officer, check all statements to ensure that they reflect the panel’s discussion, and that the written motivations correspond to the grades. It is not the task of the chair to carry out comprehensive editing. As a rapporteur, you may therefore be asked to adjust the final statement.

General advice and recommendations on final statements

The final statement shall reflect the review panel’s joint overall evaluation, including any external assessments. The final statement is the basis for the final decision and shall help the applicant understand the grounds for the review panel’s quality assessment. It is therefore very important that it is of high quality and that it is based on the discussions at the panel meeting.
When completing your final statements, you should consider the following:

**Do**

- Do focus on describing both the main strengths and weaknesses of the application. Try to emphasise relevant conceptual, structural and/or methodological issues as discussed at the review panel meeting.
- Do make sure that the written comments correspond to the grades. It is helpful to use the definitions of the grading scale in the justifications (Outstanding, Excellent, Very good to excellent, Very good, Good, Weak, and Poor). For example, if a grade of 4 is given, the justification should contain both strengths and minor weaknesses in line with the definition of this grade.
- Do consider the guiding questions for the different criteria when you formulate the final statement.
- Do write concisely but do not be too brief. The content rather than the length of the text is of significance. However, too brief justifications may counteract the aim, which is to help the applicant understand the grounds for the decision.
- Do comment on whether any divergence from the general instructions on how to write an application has been weighed into the assessment of the application.
- Do use a language that is constructive and objective.
- The final statement should be written in English.

**Do not**

- Do not include a long summary of the applicant or the research described in the application. The focus should be the assessment of the application, not a description of the project.
- Do not state any individual comments (such as “I think” or “In my view”). The final statement represents the collective review panel.
- Do not include quantifiable data, such as the exact number of publications, or bibliometric data.
- Do not include personal details (such as gender or age).
- Do not include any recommendation on whether to refuse or grant an application.
- Do not state that an application does not belong to or is unsuitable for the review panel, or for the Swedish Research Council. The review panel is obliged to review all applications in the panel.

**Summary of your tasks**

- Write the review panel’s final statement in Prisma on the applications for which you have been the rapporteur. The final statement shall be submitted in Prisma no later than one week after the review panel meeting.
- Supplement final statements by the chair, if necessary.
- Submit receipts for any expenses to the panel’s research officer.
5. Decision and follow-up

Decision

The board of the Swedish Research Council has delegated the decision on grants to the Scientific Council of Medicine and Health. This decision is based on the priority lists from the review panels and the Scientific Council will weigh in any comments from the chairs regarding the priority lists and the review panels’ final statements. The decision is published shortly thereafter on vr.se and in Prisma, and the applicants are informed on the final decision.

Follow-up

Following the review of all calls, an internal follow-up of the process and the outcome is carried out. An important starting point for this follow-up is the feedback you provide as a panel member in connection with the review panel meeting. In addition, the review process and its outcome is summarised statistically.

Questions and complaints

If you as a panel member receive questions about the evaluation of an individual application, you must refer this to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel. All complaints or questions shall be registered and then handled by the Secretary General for Medicine and Health in consultation with the chair and senior research officer of the review panel. In this case, the chair may contact you as a panel member.

Summary of your tasks

- Refer questions about the evaluation of individual applications to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel.
- Be prepared to assist the chair and the responsible Secretary General with any questions.
Appendix 1:
The Swedish Research Council’s principles and guidelines for peer review

The Board of the Swedish Research Council has adopted eight principles for peer review at the Swedish Research Council. The purpose of the principles is to provide a basis for safeguarding the scientific assessment, based on clear quality criteria with competent reviewers, within the framework of a sound peer review culture and good research practice. This document contains guidelines for the Swedish Research Council’s peer review. The guidelines are based on the eight principles, and provide concrete guidelines for how the principles for peer review shall be complied with. The guidelines relate to peer review of research funding.

The guidelines for peer review of applications fall under the principles and under the brief preambles adopted by the Board, where the principles are clarified. The principles are numbered from 1 to 8. It should, however, be noted that when applying a guideline, several principles may need to be considered. The Board’s decision to adopt the principles states clearly that: “The principles should be read together. They may conflict with each other and therefore need to be balanced against each other. How the principles are balanced against each other must be discussed in each individual case. Implementing the principles in practice needs to be the subject of an ongoing discussion. The principles should therefore be recurrently raised in the review work.”

While they are general, there is room for variation justified by factors such as differences between calls and/or research areas, or variation justified by testing new ways of working. This means that different guidelines differ in character to some extent. Some guidelines consist mostly of clarifications of legislation or other mandatory regulations, or follow from requirements for the review work adopted by the Board. These guidelines must be complied with, and follow-up should be carried out in the event deviations from such guidelines are nevertheless noted. Other guidelines are of the character “comply or explain”. A further type of guideline states that the person responsible for each call or area shall formulate instructions or justify choices made specifically for a call or a subject area.

The three types of guidelines are differentiated using terminology. In the first case, the word “shall” is part of the wording of the guideline. In the second case, the word “should” is used. In the third case, the guidelines state that the person responsible for the call shall formulate instructions for, or specifically justify aspects of the peer review.

The guidelines are currently in the process of being implemented, which means that some measures based on these have been implemented, while other guidelines will be implemented in the future.

The Swedish Research Council’s Principles for Peer Review and Guidelines for Peer Review of Research Funding

Excerpt from the Board Minutes dated 15 November 2015.

1. Expertise in the review

*The assessment of applications shall be carried out by reviewers with documented high scientific competence within the research area or areas or the subject area or areas to which the application relates and the scientific review shall be based on clear quality criteria. Reviewers shall be appointed according to clear criteria in a systematically documented process.*

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1 Or artistic competence when relevant.
Guidelines:

1. The Swedish Research Council’s peer review shall be conducted with the help of review panels with broad and deep scientific expertise of relevance to the grant format to be reviewed.
2. Review panel meetings shall constitute a central feature of the review.
3. Scientific assessment and prioritising of applications should be separated from decisions on grants.
4. Expertise is required to recruit review panel members and external reviewers.
5. For each call, there shall be documented instructions for:
   - who is recruiting,
   - what merits shall be represented on the review panel,
   - any requirements on the composition of the review panel, such as subject area competency, limits on the number of members and gradual replacement of members between calls for the same grant format,
   - percentage of international members of the review panel.
6. The maximum mandate period for a review panel member shall be six years on the same review panel. After this, a qualifying period of minimum three years shall apply.
7. The maximum period as chair is three years, as part of the overall mandate period of six years on a review panel. After this, a qualifying period of minimum three years shall apply.
8. Review panels shall comply with the Swedish Research Council’s gender equality strategy and have numerical equality (i.e. minimum 40% of each gender).
9. Appointments to review panels shall comply with the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy.

2. Objectivity and equal treatment

All evaluations shall be made in an equivalent manner and be based on the quality of the planned and executed research and on the merits of the applicant, irrespective of the applicant’s origin or identity. To avoid any conflict of interest or partiality, reviews shall be based on clear quality criteria and formalised processes.

Guidelines:

1. Ahead of each call, instructions shall be drawn up for the grading criteria to be applied and prioritised. The application and prioritising between grading criteria shall be reflected in the instructions for completing an application.
2. The instructions for the project plan, CV and publication list shall be designed to optimise the documentation for review within each research area and grant format.
3. Bibliometric data shall be used restrictively in the review, and only as part of an overall assessment of merit carried out by experts within the area in question. The bibliometrics imported in conjunction with the application shall be relevant to the research area and the grant format applicable to the call.
4. The documentation for assessment shall consist of the application, which is reviewed using the subject experts’ scientific competency and judgment. Information that is not relevant to the assessment shall not be used.
5. The assessment criteria shall be defined through guiding questions, so that it is clear what is to be assessed. The assessment criteria decided by the Director-General shall always be used, and additional criteria and guiding questions shall be adapted to each research area and grant format.
6. All assessments shall comply with the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy.
3. Ethical considerations

The assessment assumes an ethical approach and high level of integrity. The subject experts shall not carry out any preliminary ethical review, but should take into account how the applicant discusses the research and formulates the research question with regard to good research practice. If an application includes research that clearly breaches ethical rules and/or clearly contravenes Swedish or international law, this should be reflected in the assessment of the quality and/or feasibility of the research.

Guidelines:
1. There shall be clear instructions for how applicants shall account for and subject experts shall assess the description of which ethical considerations are relevant to the research project in question, and whether the research project may entail potential risks to humans or the natural environment.
2. The assessment shall pay attention to the requirement for ethical review of research relating to humans or animals.
3. Instructions shall be drawn up in conjunction with the call for how divergences from ethical guidelines and good research practice as well as dishonesty in research shall be managed in the peer review, and how such divergences shall impact on the assessment.

4. Openness and transparency

The assessment shall be based on and justified by the documentation requested by the Swedish Research Council, which in a typical case is an application for grant funding. The assessment of the documentation shall be made based on rules and guidelines set in advance and publicly known.

Guidelines:
1. All steps in the review process shall be known to the applicants, the reviewers and other researchers.
2. Information on the members of the review panel should be publicly available before the call in question opens.
3. The subject experts shall base their assessment on the current application and not have access to previous assessments, and should only exceptionally refer to previous applications. In the event the review process requires access to previous applications, this shall be made clear in the instructions for the call in question.
4. For each call, there shall be instructions for how statements should be written and what they should include.

5. Appropriateness for purpose

The peer review process shall be adapted to the call and the research area, and shall be proportional to the size and complexity of the call without neglecting the rule of law.

Guidelines:
1. At least three members shall read each application ahead of the review panel’s joint prioritising.
2. When deciding on the composition of the review panel, the adaptation of the group to the nature of the task and the number of applications the panel has to assess shall be justified.
3. For each call where applicable, there shall be instructions for how applications are sifted.
4. There shall be instructions for how consultation or external reviewers shall be used in the assessment.
6. Efficiency

The total resources used in the application and assessment, in terms of both time used and cost shall be minimised for all involved, i.e. applicants, subject experts and Swedish Research Council personnel, with consideration for maintaining quality, objectivity, transparency and appropriateness for purpose.

Guidelines:
1. For each decision about a call or review, consideration shall be paid to what can be done in order to minimise the time taken and resources used (for applicants, review panel members, external subject experts and Swedish Research Council personnel) during the process from call to decision.
2. The call, application and review processes shall be predictable and changes to the process shall be implemented with a long-term perspective.

7. Integrity

All participants in the assessment process shall respect the integrity of the process and shall not disclose to any third party what has been discussed at the meeting or the opinion of other reviewers in the ongoing processing of applications. The final assessment shall always be documented and published once a decision has been made.

Guidelines:
1. The review work shall be carried out with great integrity. Reviewers shall not have contacts with individual applicants regarding the application or the review, either during or after the review process.
2. All communications with applicants and the Swedish Research Council concerning the review process, including the grounds on which decisions are made, shall be carried out via the personnel responsible at the Swedish Research Council.
3. There shall be instructions for how reviewers shall deal with problems in reviewing parts of the subject content of an application.

8. The expert assessment shall be prepared and followed up in a structured manner.

Review processes and reviewers shall be prepared and followed up according to clear criteria. All reviewers shall have access to the same type of background documentation for the review.

Guidelines:
1. Review panel members and the review panel chair, as well as other subject experts, shall receive training at an early stage of the review process in:
   - how the assessment shall be made and what is to be assessed,
   - application of conflict of interest rules and the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy,
   - the application of the Swedish Research Council’s gender equality strategy in the review of applications,
   - how prejudices can affect opinions,
   - good research practice and ethical considerations,
   - how statements shall be worded, rules for communication between subject experts and between subject experts and applicants,
   - the chair shall also receive training in all the stages of the review, including recruitment practices and the design and group dynamics of the review panel meeting.
2. There shall be job descriptions for the chair, panel members and observers (if any participate).
3. The peer review shall always be followed up in a systematic way in order to continuously improve the review processes.
4. The follow-up of a call shall include the overall number of persons asked to participate in a review panel and, as applicable, as external subject experts, and a summary description of the reasons given for why members and external subject experts have declined.

5. There shall be instructions relating to the management of feedback and complaints from applicants.
Appendix 2:  
The Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy (1) and guidelines for the management of conflicts of interest (2)

Part 1:  
The Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy²

- Reg. No: 1.2.4-2019-00077

According to the constitutional objectivity principle, the Swedish Research Council shall observe objectivity and impartiality, and respect everybody’s equality before the law. The Administrative Procedure Act (Förvaltningslagen SFS 2017:900) contains conflict of interest provisions (disqualifications) aimed at guaranteeing the impact of the principle. This conflict of interest policy has been drawn up to ensure the Swedish Research Council lives up to these legal requirements and to prevent representatives of the Council from having conflicts of interest where the objectivity of the representatives may be questioned.³

The following applies at the Swedish Research Council:

- All forms of participation in the handling of matters at the Swedish Research Council shall be characterised by objectivity and impartiality.
- The Swedish Research Council shall work actively and continuously to ensure the Swedish Research Council’s representatives do not end up in conflicts of interest that may cause the objectivity of the representatives or the trust in the Swedish Research Council to be questioned.
- The Swedish Research Council shall manage conflict of interest situations arising according to applicable law.
- The Swedish Research Council shall decide on guidelines for managing conflicts of interest. The guidelines shall be followed up and evaluated continuously.
- The Swedish Research Council shall work to ensure all persons representing the Swedish Research Council have good knowledge about conflict of interest issues, and have read and understood the conflict of interest policy and the guidelines for managing conflicts of interest.
- Conflict of interest issues shall be communicated and discussed on an ongoing basis within the operation.
- Responsibility for ensuring compliance with the conflict of interest policy and the guidelines for managing conflicts of interest lies with the Swedish Research Council and all who take part in the handling of the Swedish Research Council’s matters. This means that the Swedish Research Council’s employees, appointed reviewers and elected members shall know and follow the conflict of interest policy.

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² This is a translation of the adopted Swedish version of the conflict of interest policy. In the event of conflict between the Swedish version and this English version, the former shall take precedence.
³ Representatives of the Swedish Research Council refers to the Council’s employees, appointed reviewers and elected members of the board, scientific councils, councils and committees.
This conflict of interest policy was adopted by the Board of the Swedish Research Council on 30 January 2019 and is valid until further notice. The policy replaces previously adopted conflict of interest policies in their entirety.
Part 2: The Swedish Research Council’s guidelines for managing conflicts of interest

1. Starting points

A characteristic of the organisation and decision-making formats of the Swedish Research Council is that the majority of the members in the Council’s decision-making and reviewing bodies are active researchers and part of the research community, which in turn is directly affected by the Council's allocation of research funds.

The handling of matters relating to research funds include a number of steps that can potentially affect the outcome of the matters. Among these are the control of formal requirements, decisions to screen out applications, the distribution of applications among the review panels and reviewers, assessments made by individual reviewers and by the review panels, decisions to approve or reject applications and the implementation of decisions.

The Swedish Research Council also carries out evaluations, appoints representatives to external bodies, carries out strategic work, responds to referrals and consultations and participates in communication activities. The Council also works on a daily basis on issues relating to direction and coordination, finance, personnel administration, IT, law, archiving and registration and operational support.

Issues regarding conflicts of interest may arise in all types of matters occurring at the Swedish Research Council. According to the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy, the Council shall itself decide on guidelines for the management of conflicts of interest. The following guidelines aim to realise the conflict of interest policy, and shall constitute support in the handling of matters at the Swedish Research Council. In addition to the guidelines, there are also specific control documents for conflicts of interest in certain types of matters.

2. Legal provisions regulating conflicts of interest

Provisions regulating disqualifying conflicts of interest can be found in Sections 16–18 of the Swedish Administrative Procedure Act, (Förvaltningslagen, SFS 2017:900, “FL”). In its capacity as an administrative government agency, the Swedish Research Council shall comply with these provisions when handling matters.

Various conflict of interest situations (Section 16 FL)

The act states that persons who take part on behalf of a public agency in handling in a way that may affect the agency’s decision in a matter has a disqualifying conflict of interest in situations such as the following:

- If he or she or any closely related person is party to the matter, or otherwise can be assumed to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent

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4 This is a translation of the adopted Swedish version of the conflict of interest policy. In the event of conflict between the Swedish version and this English version, the former shall take precedence.
• If he or she or any closely related person is or has been the representative or agent for a party to the matter, or for anyone else who can be assumed to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent
• If there is any other specific circumstance that means his or her impartiality in the matter can be questioned.

Only if it is clear that the issue of impartiality lacks any importance shall the agency disregard any disqualifying conflict of interest. It must then be a question of matters where the person who will be part of the handling lacks any opportunity to influence or become influenced by any irrelevant circumstances, such as registration matters.

Consequences and managing of conflict of interest (Sections 17–18 FL)

The consequences of a conflict of interest are regulated as follows:

• A person with a disqualifying conflict of interest must not take part in the handling of the matter.
• A person with a disqualifying conflict of interest must not be present when the matter is decided on.
• A person with a disqualifying conflict of interest may, however, carry out such tasks that cannot be carried out by someone else without significant delay of the handling.

The managing of conflict of interest is regulated as follows:

• A person who is aware of a circumstance that could be assumed to cause him or her to have a disqualifying conflict of interest is obliged to report this immediately to the agency.
• The agency shall examine issues regarding conflict of interest as soon as possible.
• The person who has a disqualifying conflict of interest may take part in the examination of the issue of conflict only if this is required for the agency to be competent to act and any replacement cannot be called in without delaying the examination significantly.

3. Preventing conflict of interest situations

The following applies in order to prevent disqualifying conflict of interest situations at the Swedish Research Council.

Information on conflict of interest circumstances

• A person who is aware of any circumstance that may mean he or she has a disqualifying conflict of interest shall voluntarily and immediately inform the Swedish Research Council of this circumstance.
• Employees of the Swedish Research Council should provide information regarding disqualifying conflict of interest circumstances to their immediate superior. When handling applications for research funding, the information should instead be given to the administrative officer responsible.
• Appointed reviewers and elected review panel members should in the first instance inform about disqualifying conflict of interest circumstances to the administrative officer responsible, and in the second instance to the chair of the review panel, or the chair of the scientific council, council or committee.

Specifically regarding matters relating to applications for research funding
• All who take part in the handling of applications for research funding shall provide information on any disqualifying conflict of interest circumstances relating to applicants and participating researchers listed in an application. In addition, and as far as possible, information should also be provided on disqualifying conflict of interest situations relating to any other person who will participate in the research according to the application.

• Applications should be made available at an early stage to members of the relevant scientific councils, councils and committees and review panels, with a request to report any disqualifying conflicts of interest.

• When review panel members are appointed and when the applications are allocated, conflict of interest issues should be recognised so that disqualifying conflict of interest situations can be avoided.

• Applications for research funding from members of the board, scientific councils, councils and committees and review panels shall not be reviewed by the panel where the member is the chair, a member or an observer. This applies irrespective of whether the member is the applicant or a participating researcher listed in the application.

• When several matters are handled in parallel, for example when a scientific council, council or committee decides on a large number of applications at once on the basis of a list of priorities established by a review panel, potential disqualifying conflicts of interest must be considered as far as possible.

Specifically for cases relating to research infrastructure

• When making decisions to appoint members or delegates to work on research infrastructure issues, any links to national infrastructures and the strategic work on infrastructure issues at administrating organisations shall be considered.

Specifically for cases relating to national and international collaboration

• When making decisions to appoint representatives to external boards and committees and other decision-making or advisory bodies, any disqualifying conflict of interest circumstances shall be considered. This also applies when deciding on an extension to a previously appointed representative’s mandate.

4. Assessment of conflicts of interest exists

The following shall be used to support an assessment of whether a disqualifying conflict of interest exists.

An assessment of whether a disqualifying conflict of interest exists shall always be carried out based on the conflict of interest provisions of the Swedish Administrative Procedure Act. The provisions cover all persons who take part in the handling of a matter on behalf of the Swedish Research Council. It is not the position designation or the job description but the actions in the individual matter that determine whether the provisions are applicable. This means that employed administrators, appointed reviewers and elected members are all covered by the provisions when they take part in the handling of matters.

In some situations, disqualifying conflict of interest issues are clear. Examples are when the person taking part in the handling
• is party to the matter
• is closely related to a party
• otherwise can be assumed to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent

Other situations may be perceived to be more unclear or difficult to assess. This applies in particular to cases in which ones impartiality in the matter can be questioned, even though the person is not a party, related to a party or can be assumed to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent. It is important that all potential conflict of interest situations are handled and assessed based on the circumstances of the individual case, and that the nature, scope and duration of the circumstances that can
be assumed to constitute a conflict of interest are considered.

Examples of situations where a disqualifying conflict of interest typically exists

Examples of situations where a disqualifying conflict of interest typically exists are:

- When an economic or other dependency circumstance exists. Examples of the latter are situations where an applicant or participating researcher has an assignment to evaluate the competence, application, department or subject of the person taking part in the handling of the matter.
- When an ongoing or recently terminated close collaboration exists, such as a teacher-student relationship, or a joint research project. The relationship between a doctoral student and his/her supervisor is considered a conflict of interest regardless of how long ago the collaboration occurred.
- When there is evident friendship, enmity or difference of opinion.
- When there is a manager-employee relationship.
- When the person taking part in the handling in another context has handled an issue the matter relates to, for example as a representative of another public agency or organisation.

Examples of situations where there is a risk of a disqualifying conflict of interest

Examples of situations where there is a risk of a disqualifying conflict of interest are:

- When there exists co-authorship of books or articles. As a rule, taking part in the handling of a matter should be avoided where research collaboration and co-authorship has occurred during the last 5 years. A joint article or a joint chapter in an edited book may be enough to establish co-authorship. Co-authorship that occurred more than 5 years ago can also constitute disqualifying conflict of interest. The determining factor will be whether or not it was the result of close collaboration, and must be assessed from case to case.
- When a person taking part in the handling of a matter belongs to the same institution (particularly small and medium-sized ones) or a similar financially independent entity as an applicant or participant.
- When the nature of a person's involvement in the matter easily arouses suspicion that the basis for impartial assessment is compromised.

5. Management of conflict of interest situations

The following applies for the management of conflict of interest situations at the Swedish Research Council.

All types of matters

- A person with a disqualifying conflict of interest must not be present when the matter is decided on, or otherwise participate in the handling of the matter.
- Conflict of interest situations, both in cases where it exists and where it has been examined and found not to exist, must be documented throughout the handling process.
- If a question of conflict of interest has been raised by an outside party, or if the conflict of interest issue relates to a person who does not consider themselves as having a disqualifying conflict of interest, or differing opinions exist otherwise whether the person has a disqualifying conflict of interest, the examination of the conflict of interest issue shall immediately be passed to the Swedish Research Council for determination.

Specifically for matters relating to applications for research funding
When handling applications for research funding, it is not always possible to prevent conflict of interest situations from arising. This is the case, for example, when a member of a scientific council, council or committee or of the board applies for research funding. In such cases, written statements on the application must be obtained from at least two external experts.

6. Communication and information about conflict of interest issues

As questions and discussions about conflict of interest arise throughout the activities of the Swedish Research Council, all persons taking part in the handling of cases must know and understand the contents of the Council’s conflict of interest policy, and the guidelines for handling a conflict of interest. To ensure this, the following applies:

• All employees shall be informed of the conflict of interest policy and the guidelines for the managing conflicts of interest.
• All new employees shall have the opportunity to discuss the meaning of the conflict of interest policy and guidelines as part of their work introduction.
• Administrative officers involved in the review of applications shall be given the opportunity to discuss conflicts of interest and the current procedures for managing such conflicts before and after the application review, in order to raise suggestions for ways to improve the work.
• The conflict of interest policy should be included in the reviewer handbooks.
• The conflict of interest policy and the guidelines shall be communicated to the scientific councils, councils and committees, and to review panel chairs and review panel members.
• The Chief Legal Officer shall have overall responsibility for the Swedish Research Council's management of conflict of interest issues.
Appendix 3:
The Swedish Research Council’s gender equality strategy

Goals for achieving gender equality at the Swedish Research Council

In compliance with its instruction, the Swedish Research Council promotes gender equality throughout its sphere of activities. The strategy for achieving this aim is to strive for gender equality throughout the organisation. Hence, the Swedish Research Council has established the following operational goals:

The Swedish Research Council shall:
1. achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its review panels;
2. ensure that the percentages of female and male applicants for grants from the Swedish Research Council correspond to the percentages of women and men among the potential research grant applicants;
3. ensure that women and men have the same success rates and receive the same average grant amounts, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant;
4. include a gender equality perspective in each analysis and evaluation, where possible;
5. integrate a gender equality perspective in the Research Council’s external communication.

The Board has the responsibility for implementation of the Swedish Research Council’s strategy. Achieving the goals requires the involvement of the entire agency, including the Scientific Councils and other Councils and Committees (SCCCs). Unless otherwise specified, the Director General is responsible for advancing the efforts towards achieving equality.

Introduction

This strategy applies to the Swedish Research Council as a research funding body. A special equal opportunities plan addresses the work of achieving equality within the Swedish Research Council as a public agency.

The primary objective of the Swedish Research Council is to allocate funding to research of the highest scientific quality and that best promotes innovation. Achieving this objective requires impartial assessment of grant applications. Impartial assessment implies gender neutrality; the Swedish Research Council shall support the best researchers, regardless of gender.

The Swedish Research Council assumes that research capacity exists to the same extent in both sexes. Moreover, the Swedish Research Council assumes that research is benefited when both genders participate and apply their expertise and experience.

Gender equality is also a matter of justice. Women and men should have equal opportunities to conduct research and develop professional careers as researchers.

Achieving gender equality throughout the Swedish Research Council’s spheres of activity requires persistent, long-term effort and continuous attention to assure that the ground gained towards equality is not lost. The agency must continually monitor and analyse its activities from an equality perspective and take

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5 Attainment of the goal must of course be assessed in the context of a sufficiently large number of decisions.
6 Success rates for women and men refer to the percentage of applications approved among total applications received from women and men respectively.
7 These include the Scientific Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, the Scientific Council for Medicine and Health, the Scientific Council for Natural and Engineering Sciences, the Council for Research Infrastructures, the Educational Sciences Committee, the Committee for Artistic Research, the Committee for Development Research and the Committee for Clinical Treatment Research.
necessary steps based on the results. The Swedish Research Council should also inform others about its actions in gender equality.

Moreover, the Swedish Research Council must consider how the results of gender research might contribute towards improving equality throughout the Research Council’s sphere of activity.

**Laws, ordinances, and appropriation directions**

Equality between women and men is addressed by a body of laws and regulations, such as the Instrument of Government Chapter 1, Section 2, the Discrimination Act (2008:567), the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100).

The objective of the governmental gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. This overall objective has four interim objectives: (i) equal division of power and influence; (ii) economic equality; (iii) equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care; (iv) men’s violence against women must stop. The operations and gender equality strategy of the Swedish Research Council relate primarily to the first two interim objectives.

According to the Swedish Research Council’s Instructions Ordinance (2009:975) Section 1 Item 14, the Swedish Research Council must promote equality between women and men within its sphere of activity. In accordance with the requirements established by its government directive, the goals achieved must be presented in the annual reports of the Swedish Research Council.

**Processes for achieving goals**

The Swedish Research Council must analyse its activities from a perspective of gender equality and follow up on the extent to which the goals have been achieved. This should be done annually in conjunction with the presentation to the Board regarding the outcome of the year’s general call and in conjunction with producing the annual report. Equality issues must be discussed by the Board and by other parts of the organisation, and necessary actions must be taken. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of gender equality must be conducted at the end of the Board’s three-year term of office. When a new Board takes office, it must review the gender equality strategy and where necessary decide on changes to the strategy. The following points describe how the operational goals should be achieved.

**1.1 Equal gender distribution in Swedish Research Council review panels**

“The Swedish Research Council should achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its review panels.” (Goal 1)

In this context, equal gender distribution is considered to exist in a panel when neither of the sexes comprises less than 40% of the panel members.

Gender distribution should be considered before appointing review panels, not least with respect to the chair positions. Work involving equality should take a long-term perspective. This means, for example, that in certain areas where women or men are greatly underrepresented among teachers and researchers at higher education institutions, the Swedish Research Council must be observant not to over-utilise those few women or men.

If the composition of a review panel, or review panel chair proposed to a Scientific Council, Council or Committee falls outside of the 40% to 60% range, this must be specified in the documentation prepared for the decision. This documentation must also include a justification for the deviation and describe the actions taken to achieve an equal gender distribution.

Gender equality aspects should also be considered when appointing participants to other groups and when making decisions concerning Swedish Research Council representation on external (national and international) bodies.
2. Grant application rates by women and men

“The Swedish Research Council should ensure that the percentages of female and male applicants for grants from the Swedish Research Council correspond to the percentages of women and men among the potential research grant applicants.” (Goal 2).

Currently, women and men are applying for research grants from the Swedish Research Council at rates corresponding to their proportion in the potential pool of research grant applicants. Should this situation change in the future, the Swedish Research Council would actively recruit more applications from the underrepresented gender.

3. Same success rates for women and men

“The Swedish Research Council should ensure that women and men have the same success rates and receive the same average size of grants, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant.” (Goal 3).

Before the Swedish Research Council decides to introduce a new type of grant or makes a new research investment the effects on gender equality must be analysed and consideration given to whether any special measures are necessary. The analysis should address gender equality at the total level and also be according to the different types of grants and subject areas.

The task of the Swedish Research Council to promote gender equality throughout its sphere of activities, as well as gender equality as a factor for raising quality should be emphasized. The texts of calls, evaluation criteria and review formats should be considered from an equality perspective.

Members of Scientific Councils and other Councils and Committees and the members of review panels must be informed about the Swedish Research Council’s gender equality strategy. The review panels shall be instructed on gender equality issues during the information meetings prior to the review work. Other experts involved must also be informed of the strategy (available in Swedish and English).

The Swedish Research Council’s review handbooks must include written instructions for the review panels, giving attention to the following:

that all evaluation criteria must be clear and explicit. When the call is issued, the criteria and the instructions for applicants must be published on the Swedish Research Council’s website; that only “active research years” should be considered in evaluating the extent of scientific productivity, i.e. time off for parental leave, sick leave, or similar circumstances should be deducted.

Prior to each new review batch, the research officers at the Swedish Research Council must discuss the above instructions with the review panels.

Before a review panel submits its proposal for allocating research grants, it must calculate the proposed success rates and average size of grants for women and men, respectively. The secretaries general must present the review panels’ grant allocation proposals, from an equality perspective, to the respective Scientific Council, other Council or Committee (SCCC), commenting on possible gender disparities in success rates and average grant amounts. These presentations must be delivered before the SCCCs make their decisions. The respective SCCCs must attach to their decision a collective assessment of the results in relation to the Swedish Research Council’s gender equality strategy. These assessments should include comments by the SCCCs concerning possible disparities, as mentioned above, and a plan/strategy to rectify them. A written consensus opinion from each of the SCCCs must be forwarded to the board.

In conjunction with the Director General’s and the SCCCs’ presentation to the Board regarding the outcome of the annual calls for proposals, the success rates for women and men must be presented for each SCCC and each grant type. The average grant amount must also be reported by gender. A summary of the results shall be included in the Swedish Research Council’s annual report. Presentations by the SCCCs to

*See Note 1.
the Board must include comments on possible disparities as regards the matters mentioned above, and a plan to rectify any disparities.

4. Gender equality perspective in analyses and evaluations

“The Swedish Research Council should include a gender equality perspective in each analysis and evaluation, where possible” (Goal 4).

A gender equality perspective should be included in every analysis and evaluation in so far as possible. This should also apply to memoranda, responses to consultations, documentation for discussion and decision-making, where relevant and possible. Direct and eventual indirect consequences for gender balance should be discussed in each analysis and evaluation. In those cases where a gender equality perspective has been deemed not possible or relevant, a specific justification should be given.

Gender balance should always be strived for in review panels and where external authors or experts are used. A statement of how the Research Council has fulfilled this objective should be provided annually to the Board.

5. A gender equality perspective in external communications

“The Swedish Research Council shall integrate a gender equality perspective in its external communication” (Goal 5).

A gender equality perspective shall be integrated in the Research Council’s external communications in all communication channels; it should also be clear in relevant contexts that the Swedish Research Council works to attain gender equality. The external image conveyed by the Swedish Research Council shall be gender-neutral in other respects too, and not reinforce gender stereotypes of, for example, researchers or subject areas.

A statement of how the Research Council has fulfilled this objective should be provided annually to the Board, at the latest when the annual report is submitted to the Government.
Appendix 4:  
**Ethics Principles: Permits/Approvals, and Good Research Practice**

The administrative organisation\(^9\) has the responsibility to ensure that the research project complies with the terms and conditions established by Swedish law.

### 1.1 Permits and approvals

The applicant (project leader) has the responsibility to acquire all necessary permits and approvals for the research that receives a grant from the Swedish Research Council.

- Research involving animal experiments requires approval from the Ethical Committee on Animal Experiments, in accordance with the Swedish Animal Welfare Act (1988:534).
- Research concerning humans and biological material from humans, and which falls under the Act on Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (2003:460), requires review and approval from an ethical review board.
- Some research may require additional permits e.g. research involving pharmaceuticals, genetically modified organisms, and ionizing radiation.

The Swedish Research Council assumes that the necessary permits and approvals have been obtained for the research covered by a grant application to the Swedish Research Council.

### 1.2 Good research practise and ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council assumes that research conducted with funding from the Swedish Research Council adheres to good research practice. The applicant must in the application present the ethical issues associated with the research and describe how they will be addressed during the research project.

### 1.3 For applications to the Swedish Research Council the following applies

- Approvals should not be sent to the Swedish Research Council.
- The applicant and the administrative organisation confirms by signing the application that necessary permits and approvals are in place when the research begins and that all other conditions that apply to the grant will be complied with.

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\(^9\) Administrative entity: A state agency or physical or legal person within whose organisation the research is conducted. Universities or higher education institutions often serve as the administrative entity for research conducted with funding from the Swedish Research Council.
Appendix 5:
Swedish Research Council in brief

The Swedish Research Council is Sweden’s largest governmental research funding body and provides support for research of the highest scientific quality in all fields of science. Most of this relates to basic research.

A large part of the funding provided by the Swedish Research Council consists of support of scientific projects for which the researchers, themselves, have formulated the research topics and project aims, and developed methods to arrive at conclusions. In order to facilitate career development for researchers and make it easier for them to gain broader experience of the research community, the Council offers career and mobility support. In addition, it provides funding for research infrastructures, research environments, graduate schools, various forms of collaboration, and Swedish membership in a host of international organisations and major research facilities.

In addition to funding research, the Swedish Research Council is also responsible for communication about research and research results. The Council is also tasked with preparing analyses relating to research policy, acting an advisor to the Government on research policy issues evaluating research and supporting and developing the conditions of clinical studies.

The vision of the Swedish Research Council is to play a leading role in developing Swedish research of the highest scientific quality, and thereby contribute to the development of society.

In 2019, the Swedish Research Council paid SEK 6.6 billion in funding, mostly to basic research in all areas of science and research infrastructures. A large part of the research funding went to projects that were proposed by the researchers themselves (researcher-initiated research). The Swedish Research Council has in total prepared 5 433 applications during 2019. Of these, 1 027 applications have been granted.

The diagram below shows allocation of funds based on support forms 2019 (million SEK).

Peer review

The Swedish Research Council recommends peer review as the best method of assessing scientific quality. The confidence of the research community in the Swedish Research Council is premised on the review being conducted by a knowledgeable, objective, impartial a transparent manner.
A total of 883 researchers served as members of review panels in 2019, with 47 per cent of the members of the review panels being associated with higher education institutions outside of Sweden.

**Administration and organisation of the Swedish Research Council**

The Swedish Research Council is a government agency within the Ministry of Education. The Council is headed by a Board and a Director-General, who is the head of the agency.

The Board of the Research Council has overall responsibility for operations as a whole, and makes decisions on general and strategic research issues according to the directives and guidelines adopted by the Parliament and Government. Six of the members are elected by an assembly of electors, which, in turn, are appointed by the higher education institutions in Sweden. The Chairperson and the remaining two members of the Board are appointed by the Government.

Under the Board, there are the scientific councils for humanities and social sciences, medicine and health, and natural and engineering sciences, the council for research infrastructures, as well as the committees for educational sciences, artistic research, and development research. Finally, there are committees for clinical therapy research and the national coordination of clinical studies.

The majority of the members of scientific councils, councils and committees are selected by the research community. As in the case of the election of the members of the Board, these are elected by electors. Some of the members are appointed by the Board of the Swedish Research Council, while several additional members are appointed by the Government.

The Director-General is responsible to the Board for ensuring that operations are conducted in accordance with the directives and guidelines decided by the Board. The Swedish Research Council has about 250 employees, and is divided into six departments – the departments for research funding, research policy, research infrastructure, communication, administration and the department of Sunet and associated services.
Appendix 6:
Specific guidelines from the Scientific Council for Medicine and Health

Role of the Scientific Council
The Scientific Council for Medicine and Health at the Swedish Research Council has an overarching responsibility to stimulate the best research by evaluating and funding grant proposals for medical research, and also by engaging in issues with long-term strategic impact on medicine and health. Through its work, the Scientific Council shall contribute to the Swedish Research Council being an internationally highly respected funding body of medical research, including both basic research and clinical research.

Goals of the Scientific Council
The Scientific Council should work towards achieving:
1. Increased support for research of the highest scientific quality
2. Sweden being a successful research nation
3. Collaboration and coordination of society’s research resources
4. Broad understanding of the significance of investment in medical research
5. Equality and variety within medical research
6. Increasing society’s knowledge of medical research and its results

The Scientific Council established the following guidelines for the evaluation process in 2019:

- The average grant level for project grants should be 1 100 000 SEK.
- The standard funding period for project grants should be four years, with the possibility to three years, and with some individual grants of five years with very high scientific quality.
- The minimum amount awarded as a project grant shall be 800 000 SEK per year, unless the call stipulates otherwise. Grants will be awarded in fixed amounts of 800 000 SEK, 1 200 000 SEK or 1 800 000 SEK.
- Starting grants will be awarded in a fixed amount of 1 500 000 SEK per year for four years.

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10 The application always sets the limit, so an applicant cannot be granted more years or a higher amount than applied for.
Appendix 7:  
Handling of applications for starting grants

Starting grants
Applications for starting grants are evaluated by the regular review panels in medicine and health (MH-01A through MH-14B). These applications are evaluated as a separate category and are not compared to regular project grants, but reviewed and graded separately. Applications for starting grants compete for a budget specially allocated for this purpose.

Nomination
Each panel are given the opportunity to nominate up to 20 per cent of the starting grant applications reviewed by the panel. Nominations should mirror the application ratio between the genders. Nominated applications must have an overall grade of at least 5. The nominated applications should not be given an internal ranking.

Assessment
Since the Starting panel reads the final statements for the nominated applications, it is crucial that the statements identify each application’s strengths and weaknesses to serve as a basis for the final evaluation. It is not the task of the Starting panel to reconsider field-specific, scientific assessments, but to assess the researcher’s potential to develop into a successful researcher. It is the Starting panel’s task to assess the support letter.

The applications which were nominated to the starting panel will receive two statements: one statement from the topic specific panel and another one from the overarching starting panel.

Funding/budget
In order for a final funding decision to be made by the Scientific Council, the Starting panel shall produce a list of the applications that are recommended for funding. This recommendation must mirror the application ratio between the genders. The Starting panel shall also submit a reserve list for funding.

Panel composition and meeting
The Starting panel consists of international members. The peer reviewers will meet on 12 – 13 October 2020 to prepare their recommendation for funding prior to the Scientific Council’s decision meeting.
Appendix 8:
How the Swedish Research Council´s conflict of interest policy applies in the field of medicine and health

Clarification of specific conflict of interest situations in medicine and health
A conflict of interest exists when the persons in question have been involved in a scientific collaboration or joint production within the preceding five (5) years. A jointly authored article is sufficient to count as joint production. When the collaboration has been particularly close, the five-year period may be extended. A conflict of interest exists in the relationship between a doctoral student and the supervisor, no matter how long ago the collaboration took place. A further exception from the five-year rule may be made for collaborations in the form of multicentre studies. These are assessed case by case.

Reporting a conflict of interest
Shortly after the deadline for applications, the chair and panel members shall report (in Prisma) any conflicts of interest in the panels with the same subject orientation. For example, a member of A1 shall report conflicts of interest for the applications submitted to both A1 and A2, a member of B2 shall report conflicts of interest for the applications submitted to both B1 and B2, etc. This is to reduce the number of applications that must be reallocated at a later stage to other members owing to conflict of interest.

If applications are identified that need to be moved to another alphabetical group (A-H), the members of the panel to which an application is moved will be informed and asked to report any conflict of interest in respect of the “new” application.

Handling of reported conflicts of interest in review panel meetings
At each review panel meeting, there is a list of all the conflicts of interest reported by all persons present in the room (i.e. chair, vice-chair, members, observers and Swedish Research Council personnel). Before each application is discussed, Swedish Research Council personnel will check the names on the list and ask the persons who reported a conflict of interest to leave the room. They may only return once the discussion of the application has finished and the other reviewers on the panel have agreed on joint grades. Members who become aware of a conflict of interest during a meeting must immediately report this. The chair, the member and the Swedish Research Council personnel will then discuss how to proceed with the matter.

Special handling of applications from a Scientific Council member
When an application is submitted by a Scientific Council member or a member of the Swedish Research Council’s board, written statements must be obtained from two external reviewers. The external statements are weighed into the final assessment given by the review panel responsible for evaluating the application.
Appendix 9:
Review panels within medicine and health

Review Panels and their members

**MH-01A: Molecular medicine**
Basic disease mechanisms / Cell- and molecular biology / Biochemistry / Genetics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tr>
<td>Madeleine Durbeej-Hjalt, chair</td>
<td>Lund university</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Sebastian Barg</td>
<td>Uppsala university</td>
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<td>Yenan Bryceson</td>
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<td>Cecilia Sahlgren</td>
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**MH-01B: Molecular medicine**
Basic disease mechanisms / Cell- and molecular biology / Bioinformatics / Systems medicine / Genomics

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**MH-02: Molecular medicine and therapy**
Basic disease mechanisms / Biomaterials / Biotechnology / Pharmacology / Pharmacy / Toxicology / Related research areas

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<tr>
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**MH-03A: Immunity and inflammation**
Immunity / Inflammation / Autoimmunity / Transplantation / Related research areas

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### MH-03B: Immunity and inflammation

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<td>Joan Yuan</td>
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### MH-04A: Infection

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### MH-04B: Infection
Infection, primarily within virology and parasitology / Related research areas

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### MH-05: Circulation and respiration
Cardiology / Clinical physiology / Vascular biology / Pulmonology / Nephrology / Related research areas

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**MH-06: Surgical disciplines**  
Anaesthesiology / Intensive care / Surgery / Odontology / Medical imaging / Orthopedic surgery / Radiology / Urology / Related research areas

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**MH-07: Women's and children's health**  
Gynecology / Obstetrics / Pediatrics / Perinatology / Reproduction medicine / Related research areas

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### MH-08A: Cancer
Molecular cancer research / Oncology / Related research areas

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### MH-08B: Cancer and hematology
Molecular cancer research / Oncology / Blood disorders / Haematopoiesis / Related research areas

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### MH-09: Endocrinology, gastroenterology and metabolism

Andrology / Diabetes / Hepatology / Obesity / Nutrition / Related research areas

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### MH-10: Neurosciences

Neurosciences / Neurodegeneration / Related research areas

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**MH-11: Neurology and sensory organs**

Neurosciences / Neurology / Audiology / Logopaedics / Muscular disorders / Neurophysiology / Ophthalmology / Rehabilitation medicine / Related research areas

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**MH-12: Mental health**

Clinical addiction research / Psychiatry / Related research areas

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**MH-13: Health care sciences**

Occupational therapy / Audiology / Physiotherapy / Gerontology / Health psychology / Logopaedics / Nursing / Related research areas

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**MH-14A: Public health sciences**

Epidemiological studies / Global health / Health care organization / Health politics / Pharmaceutical outcomes research / Social medicine / Related research areas

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<tr>
<td>Mikael Svensson</td>
<td>Göteborg University</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Björn Wettermark</td>
<td>Uppsala university</td>
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</table>
### MH-14B: Public health sciences

Epidemiological studies / Occupational medicine / Environmental medicine / Salutogenesis / Related research areas

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markku Peltonen, chair</td>
<td>Finnish institute for health and welfare</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustaf Edgren</td>
<td>Karolinska Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johan Hallqvist</td>
<td>Uppsala University</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åsa Hörnsten</td>
<td>Umeå University</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eiliv Lund</td>
<td>Arctic University of Norway</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christer Malm</td>
<td>Umeå university</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Jaana Rysä</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susanna Toivanen</td>
<td>Stockholm University</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MH-3R: Development of methods to replace, reduce and refine animal experiments

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Chambers</td>
<td>University of Surrey</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriberto Rodriguez-Martinez</td>
<td>Linköping University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erika Roman</td>
<td>Uppsala University and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Tenje</td>
<td>Uppsala University</td>
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</table>
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