Research Environment Grant within Clinical Therapy Research: Full Applications 2018

SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
Welcome as an expert reviewer for the Swedish Research Council’s peer review process in Clinical Therapy Research for 2018 and our call for research environment grants – full application stage. Your assignment as a member of our review panel 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 final statements to be sent to 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.

Jan-Ingvar Jönnson
Secretary General, Medicine and Health
Innehåll

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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 relevant information needed during the review process. Each section ends with a summary of your tasks, and if applicable the date by which each task must be completed. Please see also p. 16 for a checklist summarising the various tasks you have during the different steps of the process.

Applications for research environment grants within Clinical Therapy Research are submitted in a two-stage process. The project outline stage is now completed. Applicants, whose outlines were approved, were invited to submit a full application.

The project outline’s review process (steps 1-4) was covered in the Peer review handbook 1. The remaining steps (5-9) are the focus of this handbook (Peer review handbook 2).

1. Call for project outline and preparation
2. Review of project outline
3. First review panel meeting
4. Final statement for project outline
5. Call for full application and preparation
6. Review of full application
7. Second review panel meeting
8. Final statement for full application
9. Decision and follow-up

In this introductory section, 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.

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 portal paragraph to the Swedish Research Council’s Instruction Ordinance 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 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 eight principles for peer review (see Appendix 1).

Conflict of interest

A process involving peer review means that the assessment of applications is carried out by researchers who are themselves part of the collective of researchers applying for grants. This creates a particular risk of 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).

As a panel member, you are obliged to report any conflict of interest in relation to the applications you will be reviewing. In the event of any doubt, please confer with the chair and the Research Council personnel. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with the Research Council. Where a conflict of interest exists, another reviewer will be appointed.
Gender equality
The Swedish Research Council shall promote gender equality within its area of activities. For this reason, the 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”. Review panels shall take the gender equality goal into account and comment on the success rate, if there are any disparities. For the research environment grant within Clinical Therapy Research, gender equality is used as a borderline condition, thus when ranking applications of equal quality, applicants from the under-represented gender shall be prioritised.

Confidentiality
Throughout the review process, applications and the assessment of applications shall be treated with confidentiality. This means that any third parties must not be informed of what was discussed at the meeting, nor of any individual views. All communications with applicants and the Swedish Research Council concerning the review process or the grounds on which decisions are made shall be carried out via the Research Council’s research officer responsible.

Prisma
All the assessment work is carried out in the web-based system Prisma. Once registered as a user in the system, you will get access to the applications. Further information is available in Prisma’s User Manual. If you have any questions concerning the system and cannot find the answer in Prisma’s user manual, please contact the research officer responsible.

Roles in the review process
At the stage of full application, the review panel is composed of clinical and statistical experts. The clinical experts are given the role of the panel’s chair, vice chair and rapporteurs (see below).

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 complied with. The chair is responsible for identifying any need of external reviewers. The chair is also responsible for ensuring that the final statements reflect the panel’s discussion and joint assessment.

The vice chair is appointed by the panel chair in consultation with the Research Council personnel. The vice chair’s task is to stand in for 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. In such cases, the vice chair is responsible for ensuring that the final statements reflect the panel’s discussion and joint assessment.

Panel member
Panel members act either as rapporteur (one for each application) or reviewer. The tasks of each panel member are to assess and grade the applications assigned to the review panel. Rapporteurs also write a “preliminary statement” prior to the review panel meeting. Even though written statements are optional for reviewers, it is strongly recommended that you conduct this task as input from all reviewers is an important tool for the rapporteur to finalize a high-quality statement communicated to the applicant.

At the review panel meeting, the rapporteur gives a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of an application. After the review panel has discussed and jointly graded the application, the rapporteur must also summarise the review panel’s “final statement”.

Swedish Research Council personnel
In addition to their roles as administrators for the review panel, the research officer and senior research officer also have the task of ensuring that the rules and procedure established for the process are complied with, and to pass on the board’s intentions for the review. The Swedish Research Council personnel does not participate in the review work.

Observer
Members of the Committee for Clinical Therapy Research participate as observers in the review panels. Their main purposes are to be a link between review panels and the decision-making body (the Committee), and to give feedback on the panels’ work. Along with the Swedish Research Council personnel, the observers are a part of our continuous quality assurance process for evaluations.

Secretary General
The Secretary General has the overall responsibility for the review process and for questions of a scientific nature. The Secretary General will deal with any questions and/or complaints following the grant decision.

Coordinator of the Evaluation process and Coordinator of the Committee
The Coordinator of the Evaluation process and the Coordinator of the Committee assist the Secretary General in his work and coordinate (internally and externally) the practical aspects of evaluation process.
5. CALL FOR FULL APPLICATION AND PREPARATION

One review panel at the full application stage

Once the call has closed, applications are checked and assigned to the Clinical Therapy Research review panel (KBF). This panel is composed of the clinical and statistical experts who participated in the review process at the outline stage, as panel members in KBF-1, KBF-2 or KBF-3. For details on the KBF, see Appendix 6.

The same rapporteur for the full application as for the project outline

Each panel member assess all applications assigned to the panel. No change in the previously assigned rapporteurs will be made if no new conflict of interest arise (see “Reporting conflict of interest once more”).

Reporting conflict of interest once more

Since information on “participating researchers” are included at the full application stage you will be asked to report any new conflict of interest. This is done in Prisma as soon as possible, once the applications assigned to the review panel are available in the system. Where a conflict of interest exists, another rapporteur will be appointed. The reviewers with conflict of interest will not have access to the applications in questions.

If any doubt arises on issues of conflict of interest or competency to review, you should communicate to the chair or the Swedish Research Council personnel. If you discover later on in the process that you have a conflict of interest, this must also be reported to the chair and the research officer responsible.

For contact information on the Swedish Research Council personnel, see Appendix 7.

Planning and preparation ahead of the review panel meeting

When 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 Research Council’s procedures and policy on travel. It is important that your contact details are up to date, so that the Research Council personnel and the panel chair can contact you easily. Throughout the review process, you will receive instructions via email when it is time to carry out the various steps of the review work.

Summary of your tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book travel ahead of the review panel meeting.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report any new conflict of interest.</td>
<td>12 September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. REVIEW OF FULL APPLICATION

The review period lasts from the time you get access to the full applications in Prisma, until approximately 10–14 days before the second review panel meeting. During this period, you need to carry out the assessment (for details, see below). Thereafter, Prisma is closed for editing. At the same time the system opens for reading, so that you can read the assessments and grades given by the other reviewers and by that prepare for the discussions held at the review panel meeting.

For the call text, follow the link: Research environment grant within clinical therapy research.

Starting points for the review

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 questions arise 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.

Your review shall be based on the application contents. Information that is irrelevant to the review should not be used. 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. However, 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. As from this year, by signing the application, the applicant and the administrating organisation confirm that the applicant has not been found guilty of scientific misconduct during the last two years.

Evaluation criteria

Your assessment is based on five evaluation criteria – Scientific quality of the proposed research, Novelty and originality, Merits of the applicants, Feasibility, and Benefit of the research - patient value. The criteria are evaluated against a seven- or three-point grading scale, and are intended to reflect the application’s “quality profile”. To facilitate the evaluation of these criteria, there are a number of guiding questions to be taken into account in the evaluation work (for details, see “Guiding questions” below).

Individual review

Each application shall be reviewed and graded by all members of the review panel; one rapporteur and the other reviewers. For the applications where you are the rapporteur, 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 shall write an assessment, which shall
also consist of a numerical grade and written comments, but here the comments do not have to be as detailed. This work shall be carried out in Prisma.

Guiding questions

Scientific quality of the proposed research

- Is the project design sufficiently described according to the guidelines for the application?
- Is the main research question(s) motivated and specified?
- Is the primary outcome(s) and endpoint(s) well defined and the most appropriate?
- Is the proposed project design the most adequate design to address the objectives? Would an alternative study design have increased efficiency?
- If any, which are the limitations of the project design?
- Have the target groups (patient groups, patient organizations, family members and others who may benefit from the research findings) been consulted in the planning of the study and the choice of endpoints?
- Are the variables and measurements/assessments, power calculations, sample size and patient selection convincingly described?
- Has the project a clear statistical analysis design that is linked to the research question?
- Is the project national, i.e. it involves collaboration and patient recruitment from a minimum of four Swedish county councils/regions, or does it involve National Specialised Medical Care? Have similar studies been conducted before?
- Is there a need of more research in this area in accordance to existing systematic reviews, national and international guidelines and/or identified knowledge gaps?
- Will the results of the project fill an existing knowledge gap in the clinic?

Novelty and originality

- Is there a need of more research in this area in accordance to existing systematic reviews, national and international guidelines and/or identified knowledge gaps?
- Have similar studies been conducted before?
- Will the results of the project fill an existing knowledge gap in the clinic?
- Does the project have the potential to deliver implementable results beneficial to patients and society?

Merits of the applicant(s)

- Do the team (applicant and the participating researchers) have sufficient research experience, expertise, and scientific network for performing the proposed project?
- Based on previous publications and other scientific achievements, does the team show a track record of high quality and ability to successfully disseminate research findings? (focus should be given to the most relevant and important publications and reports with emphasis on quality rather than quantity)
- Is there appropriateness of the team, if applicable, in terms of availability and complementarities of all the relevant expertise, and in how the different roles and responsibilities are distinguished?
- Has the applicant and/or any of the participating researchers been involved in critical evaluation of clinical studies or guideline establishment?

Feasibility

- Is the recruitment of patients into the study feasible within the time frame of the project – have drop-outs and loss of enrollment in the recruitment due to holidays been taken into account?
- Does the project include the availability and accessibility of relevant personnel, including statistician, skills, equipment, facilities/infrastructures and other necessary resources?
- Is the team composition and its environment suitable for carrying out the proposed research?
- Is there involvement of a clinical trials unit or any trial staff (if applicable)?
- Is it clear who is responsible for the data management?
• Is the time schedule optimal to carry out the proposed project within the timeframe of three years?

**Benefit of the research – patient value**

• May the results of the study contribute to a significantly increased clinical benefits and/or less harms for the individual? Assessed clinical value can be influenced by prevalence, severity of the disease or social costs.
• May the results of the study be directly implementable into clinical practice within a relatively near future (2-10 years)?
• May the results of the study contribute to a better use of healthcare resources?
• Has there been any patient involvement in the study design and choice of endpoints?

A seven-grade scale is used to evaluate the criteria Scientific quality of the proposed research, Novelty and originality, Merits of the applicants, and Benefit of the research - patient value:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outstanding</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally strong application with negligible weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong application with negligible weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very good to excellent</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong application with minor weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very good</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong application with minor weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some strengths, but also moderate weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few strengths, but also at least one major weakness or several minor weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few strengths, and numerous major weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-grade scale is used to evaluate the criterion Feasibility:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feasible</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partly feasible</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not feasible</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each criterion, you can also mark “Insufficient”, if you consider that the application lacks sufficient information to allow a reasonable evaluation of the criterion.

**Overall grade**

After grading the individual criteria, you need to weigh them together into an overall grade for the application according to the seven-grade scale above. The overall grade is not the same as an average grade or a summary of the grades for the individual criteria; instead, it should 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.
Due to the nature of clinical therapy research, the Novelty and originality should be weighted lower than the other criteria. The focus of the assessment should be given on the criteria Scientific quality of the proposed research and Benefit of the research - patient value.

External reviewers
It is the panel chair’s responsibility to identify any applications that requires external review. The Coordinator of the Evaluation process will assist the chair, and shall propose reviewers in consultation with the Secretary General. External review may be justified if the scientific character of a project outline does not correlate with the joint competence of the review panel, or in case of substantial conflict of interest within the review panel. In most cases, the research officer responsible at the Swedish Research Council will contact the proposed external reviewers.

Summary of your tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade and write preliminary statement on all applications for which you are the rapporteur.</td>
<td>16 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade and write comments on all applications for which you are a reviewer.</td>
<td>16 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Before the panel meeting in the end of October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>As soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the Swedish Research Council immediately if you suspect any deviation from ethical guidelines or good research practice, or if you suspect scientific misconduct.</td>
<td>As soon as possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. SECOND REVIEW PANEL MEETING

Discussion on applications

The applications are discussed on the basis of the individual assessment done before the meeting, taking into account the five subsidiary criteria used for the evaluation. While the chair leads the discussion, the rapporteur gives an introduction to the application in question. Following the statistical assessment, given by the statistician, all other members of the panel give their view on the application. The chair is responsible for including any assessments from external reviewers in the discussion. For each application discussed at the meeting, the panel shall agree on subsidiary grades and an overall grade. The rapporteur for each application shall make notes ahead of the task of formulating the panel’s final statement.

All members of the review panel have equal responsibility for each application assessed, and each one is evaluated based on its own merits, competing with each other on equal terms. No application may therefore be given a higher or lower grade because it belongs within a certain subject area, nor shall the panel carry out any quota-based allocation between the scientific disciplines included in the panel. It is also important that an application/applicant receives a new assessment each time of applying. For this reason, the panel will not have access to previous applications or assessments.

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

Prioritising

Once all applications have been discussed, and the panel has agreed on an overall grade for each application, the panel shall carry out a prioritisation of the applications with the highest scientific quality, proposing two priority lists; one on the applications to be awarded grants within the panel’s budgetary framework and the other on the reserves, covering the applications that fall immediately outside the panel’s budgetary framework.

Special conditions – gender equality

In accordance with the Strategy for gender equality at the Swedish Research Council, gender equality is used as a special condition when recommending applications of equivalent scientific quality. This means that in conjunction with the overall recommendation, 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 considered to be of equivalent quality. Special conditions shall not be applied by individual reviewers in their work ahead of the review panel meeting.
Feedback to the Swedish Research Council

In conjunction with the review panel meeting, the panel is encouraged to provide feedback on the review work carried out, by commenting in the various aspects of the process. This is usually a concluding item on the meeting agenda.

Summary of the tasks of the review panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Shall be completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Agree on grades for each individual criterion and an overall grade for each application.</td>
<td>At the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Agree on a priority list for the applications to be awarded funding within the review panel’s budgetary framework.</td>
<td>At the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Agree on a priority list with reserves, covering the applications that fall immediately outside the panel’s budgetary framework.</td>
<td>At the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Contribute with feedback on the review process.</td>
<td>At the meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. FINAL STATEMENT FOR FULL APPLICATION

The rapporteur writes a final statement
Following the review panel meeting, you need to finalize the panel’s statements for those applications for which you have been the rapporteur. The preliminary statement you have entered into Prisma ahead of the review panel meeting will form the basis for the final statement. You need to modify the preliminary statement so that it reflects the panel’s joint overall evaluation of the application.

Since the final statement is sent to the applicant, it is important that it corresponds to the final grades, thus describing the application’s main strengths and weaknesses as well as including any necessary clarifications.

As rapporteur, you usually have one week after the review panel meeting to enter your final statements in Prisma.

The chair reviews all final statements
The chair will with help of the senior research officer screen all statements to ensure that they reflect the discussion by the review panel. It is not the task of the chair to carry out comprehensive editing. The rapporteurs may therefore be asked to adjust their final statements.

General advice and recommendations on final statements

When completing your final statements, you should consider the following:

- 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.
- Make sure that the written comments correspond to the grades. Use the definitions of the grading scale (see p. 9) in the justifications. 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.
- Consider the guiding questions for the different criteria (see pp. 8-9) when you formulate the final statement.
- Write concisely; the content rather than the length of the text is of significance. However, do not be too brief; the final statement should contain sufficient information to help the applicant understand the grounds for the assessment.
- Comment on if divergence from the general instructions for the application has been weighed into the assessment of the application.
- Use a language that is constructive and objective.
- The final statement must be written in English.
In the statements, you should avoid the following:

- Do not include a long summary about 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 is from the review panel collectively.
- Exclude quantifiable data, such as the exact number of publications, or bibliometric data.
- Exclude personal details (such as gender or age).
- Do not include any recommendations 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 obligated to review all applications in the panel.

Summary of the tasks of the review panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Completed Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write the review panel’s final statement in Prisma on the applications for which you have been the rapporteur.</td>
<td>1 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit receipts for any expenses to the panel’s research officer responsible.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. DECISION AND FOLLOW-UP

Decision
The board of the Swedish Research Council has delegated the decision on grants to the Committee for Clinical Therapy Research. This decision is based on the priority lists (including reserves) from the review panel, along with the review panels’ final statements and any justifications from the chair regarding the priority lists. The decision is published shortly thereafter on vr.se and in Prisma, and the applicants are informed of the final outcome.

Follow-up
Following the review of each annual call, 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 conjunction with the review panel meeting. In addition, statistics of various kinds are produced.

Questions and Complaints
If you as a panel member receive any question about the evaluation of an individual application, you must refer this to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel. All complaints or questions about clarification 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. The chair may contact you as a panel member if necessary.

Summary of your tasks

- Refer any questions about the evaluation of individual applications to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel.
- Be prepared to assist the chair and the Secretary General responsible in the event of any questions.
**CHECKLIST**

Below is a summary of the various tasks you have during the different stages of the process.

| Call for full application and preparation | □ Book travel ahead of the review panel meeting.  
□ Report any new conflict of interest. |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Review of full applications              | □ Grade and write preliminary statement on all applications for which you are the rapporteur.  
□ Grade and write comments on all applications for which you are a reviewer.  
□ 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.  
□ 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. |
| Second review panel meeting              | □ Agree on grades for each individual criterion and an overall grade for each application.  
□ Agree on a priority list for the applications to be awarded funding within the review panel’s budgetary framework.  
□ Agree on a priority list with reserves, covering the applications that fall immediately outside the panel’s budgetary framework.  
□ Contribute with feedback on the review process. |
| Final statement for full application      | □ Write the review panel’s final statement in Prisma on the applications for which you have been the rapporteur.  
□ Submit receipts for any expenses to the panel’s research officer responsible. |
| Decision and follow-up                   | □ Refer any questions about the evaluation of individual applications to the Swedish Research Council’s personnel.  
□ Be prepared to assist the chair and the Secretary General responsible in the event of 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. Based on these principles, guidelines for the Swedish Research Council’s peer review of research funding has been developed. The guidelines provide concrete guidelines for how the principles for peer review shall be complied with. The guidelines concern peer review of research support.

The guidelines for peer review of applications have been subsumed under the principles and 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 the guidelines 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 those 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 through the use of 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 those responsible for the call shall formulate instructions for, or specifically justify aspects of the peer review.

The guidelines are currently in the implementation phase, which means that certain activities based on these have been executed while other guidelines will be implemented in the future.

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

Extract from the board's minutes 2017-11-15

1. Expertise in the assessment

The assessment of applications shall be carried out by experts with a documented high scientific competence within the research area or areas or the disciplinary 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.

\[1\] 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 form of grant to be reviewed.
2. Review panel meetings shall constitute a central element of the review.
3. Scientific assessment and prioritising of applications should be separated from decisions on grants.
4. Scientific expertise is required to recruit review panel members and external reviewers.
5. For each call, there shall be documented instructions for:
   - who is recruiting review panel members and external reviewers,
   - what merits shall be represented on the review panel,
   - any requirements on the composition of the review panel, such as research area competence, limits on the number of members, and gradual replacement of members between calls for the same form of grant,
   - 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 waiting 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 waiting 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 assessments shall be carried out in an equivalent manner and be based on the quality of the research planned and performed and on the applicant’s merits, irrespective of the origins or identity of the applicant. To avoid any conflict of interest or partiality, assessments shall be based on clear quality criteria and formalised processes.*

**Guidelines:**

1. Ahead of each call, instructions shall be formulated for which grading criteria to be applied and prioritised. The application and prioritising between grading criteria shall be reflected in the instructions for submitting an application.
2. The instructions for the project plan, CV and publication list shall be designed to optimise the basis for review within each research area and form of grant.
3. Bibliometrics shall be used only with caution in the review, and only as part of an overall assessment of the merits carried out by reviewers with expertise in the area in question. Bibliometrical data gathered in conjunction with the application shall be relevant to the research area and the form of grant the call concerns.
4. The basis for assessment shall be the application, which is assessed using the reviewers’ scientific competence 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 form of grant.
6. All assessments shall comply with the Swedish Research Council’s conflict of interest policy.

3. **Ethical considerations**

   *The assessment presumes an ethical approach and high level of integrity. The reviewers 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 is not in compliance with 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 how reviewers shall assess the account of, the ethical considerations relevant to the research project in question, and whether the research project may entail any potential risk to humans or the natural world.
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 deviations from ethical guidelines and good research practice as well as misconduct in research shall be managed in the peer review, and how such deviations 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 research funding. The assessment of the application shall be 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 opens.
3. The reviewers 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 final 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 legal security.

Guidelines:
1. At least three panel members shall review each application ahead of the review panel’s collective 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 between panels 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, reviewers 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, it shall be taken into consideration what can be done in order to minimise the time spent and resources used (for applicants, review panel members, external reviewers 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 processes shall be implemented with a long-term perspective.

7. Integrity
All participants in the review 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 task 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 communication between 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 proceed when they encounter limitations or problems in reviewing parts of the subject content of an application.

8. The peer review 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 documentation for the review.

Guidelines:
1. Review panel members and the review panel chair, as well as external reviewers, 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 unconscious bias can affect opinions,
   • good research practice and ethical considerations,
   • how the final statements shall be formulated,
   • rules for communication among reviewers and between reviewers 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 written descriptions for the task of 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 or, if any, as external reviewers, and a summary description of the reasons given for why panel members and external reviewers have declined participation.
5. There shall be instructions relating to the handling of feedback and complaints from applicants.
APPENDIX 2. THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL’S CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL NR 2, 2014
APPENDIX 1

Conflict of Interest Policy
Decision 2014-04-10

1. Why does the Swedish Research Council have a Conflict of Interest Policy?
The Conflict of Interest Policy is an important tool in safeguarding the principle of objectivity stipulated by constitutional law, which implies that government agencies must maintain objectivity and impartiality, and must consider the equality of all persons before the law. Its purpose is to prevent conflicts of interest for representatives of government agencies in situations where their objectivity could be questioned. The Conflict of Interest Policy is significant not only in terms of the protection of legal rights, but also in terms of public trust in government agencies.

The Swedish Research Council differs from many other government agencies in that the majority of the members in its decision-making and reviewing bodies are active researchers chosen by the research community, and are thus directly affected by the agency’s allocation of research funds. Moreover, the evaluation of applications comprises a number of intermediate measures that can potentially affect the outcome of decisions, including the control of formal conditions, decisions to disallow applications, the distribution of applications to evaluation panels and reviewers, individual reviews, reviews by evaluation panels, the implementation of decisions and the management of complaints. The Swedish Research Council also conducts assessments, appoints members to external agencies, is involved in strategic planning, responds to proposals, and participates in communication work, among other things. Some of this work is accomplished through peer review, where experts within a certain field of research assess applications from within the same field. In order not to jeopardise legal security or public trust, it is important that all the Swedish Research Council’s work is conducted in a manner that not only prevents conflicts of interest, but takes ambiguous and sensitive situations into account.

It is the responsibility of the Swedish Research Council and of each individual administrator to adhere to the Conflict of Interest Policy. The term “administrator” herein refers to and includes anyone within the Swedish Research Council organisation who could affect the outcome of a matter. This includes officials, appointed reviewers and elected members.

2. What is conflict of interest?
Provisions regarding conflict of interest can be found in the Administrative Procedure Act (1986:223).

According to Section 11 of the Administrative Procedure Act - an Act to which the Swedish Research Council is subject as a government agency – it is stipulated that an administrator enters into a conflict of interest if:
- the matter in question concerns himself or his spouse, parents, children, brothers or sisters or someone else who is closely related to him, or if he or someone closely related to him can expect extraordinary advantage or detriment from the outcome of the matter, or
- there is some other special circumstance that is likely to undermine confidence in his impartiality in the matter.

3. The consequences of conflict of interest
Section 12 of the Administrative Procedure Act describes the consequences of conflict of interest. It states that:
- someone who has a conflict of interest may not handle the matter in question,
• someone who is aware of a circumstance that could be interpreted as a conflict of interest must disclose it of their own accord, and
• if an issue regarding conflict of interest has been raised, the government agency must immediately take action and reach a decision.

The general rule is that the person who has a conflict of interest may neither undertake any preparatory measures nor participate in the resolution of the matter. It is therefore very important that an administrator, regardless of the grounds for conflict of interest and at every step of the review process, avoids administering any application in which a conflict of interest has been established. In addition, someone who is aware of a circumstance that could be interpreted as a conflict of interest must disclose it of their own accord. If an issue regarding conflict of interest has been raised, the Swedish Research Council must immediately take action and resolve the issue.

4. Situations that may constitute conflict of interest
The following situations present a particular risk of conflict of interest and/or can be interpreted as ambiguous in terms of credibility. Individual situations must be assessed on their nature and extent as well as on how long they have been going on.

The following situations typically constitute a conflict of interest:
• when an administrator in a certain matter is simultaneously dependent on an applicant/participant in another matter. An example is if the applicant/participant is responsible for reviewing the administrator's qualifications, grant application, institution or subject area,
• when an administrator has an ongoing or recently terminated close collaboration with an applicant/participant, such as a teacher-student relationship, or runs a joint research project with an applicant/participant. The relationship between a doctoral student and their supervisor is deemed 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 financial dependence, and
• when there is a manager-employee relationship.

The following situations may constitute conflict of interest:
• the co-authorship of books or articles. As a guideline, administration should be avoided in the case of research collaboration and co-authorship which occurred in the last 5 years. A joint article or a joint chapter in an edited book is enough to establish co-authorship. Co-authorship that occurred more than five years ago can also constitute conflict of interest. The determining factor will be whether it was the result of close, professional collaboration or not, and will be judged on a case-by-case basis,
• when an administrator belongs to the same institution (particularly small and medium-sized ones) or a similar financially independent entity as an applicant/participant, and
• when the nature of someone's involvement in the matter easily arouses suspicion that the basis for impartial assessment is compromised.

5. Prevention of conflict of interest
The following guidelines have been implemented by the Swedish Research Council to prevent situations constituting conflict of interest.
• Administrators in relevant Scientific Councils, committees and evaluation panels should be notified of applications at an early stage, along with a request to report any possible conflicts of interest.
• When evaluation panels are appointed and when applications are distributed, conflicts of interest should be noted and avoided. In some cases, this can be done by appointing the evaluation panels after the applications have been received or by redistributing an application to another group.
• Administrators at risk of conflict of interest will not be appointed as the rapporteur of an application.
• Administrators at risk of conflict of interest will not be present when an application is considered by the evaluation panel.
• Even in terms of participants, possible conflicts of interest should be heeded as much as possible. “Participants” refers to researchers who play a crucial or central role in the implementation of the proposed research.
• Administrators who do not intend to apply for grants or participate in an application during the time they work as administrators are recruited as widely as possible.
• Collective administration of matters, i.e., the simultaneous administration of several matters, for example when a Scientific Council decides on a large number of applications at once according to a list of priorities established by an evaluation panel, attention must be paid to potential conflict of interest to the furthest extent possible.
• Applications for research funding from members of the Board, of Scientific Councils, councils, committees and evaluation panels are not considered by the group of which the member is Chair, Member or Observer. This applies whether the member is an applicant or a participant.

6. Managing conflict of interest
The preceding guidelines cannot completely prevent the occurrence of conflict of interest. Common situations include:
• when a Research Council member or Board member applies for a grant, or
• when an application falls within a highly specialised field where it is not possible to find members for evaluation panels who are not closely connected to the applicant.

In these cases, written evaluations must be obtained from at least two external experts.

In cases of conflict of interest, the following measures must be taken when administering a matter:
• The individual who has a conflict of interest must leave the room. This provision remains in effect for the duration of the administration process.
• Any conflict of interest, i.e., both in cases where it exists and where it has been examined and found not to exist, must be documented throughout the administration process.
• If the minutes of a meeting are not recorded, a record of conflict of interest must be registered regardless.

7. Communication of the Conflict of Interest Policy
Questions and discussions regarding conflict of interest may arise within all of the Swedish Research Council’s activities. It is therefore essential that all administrators are well-informed about the Swedish Research Council’s Conflict of Interest Policy. To ensure this:
• all new employees should be informed of the Swedish Research Council’s Conflict of Interest Policy and its implications should be discussed as part of their work introduction,
• administrators involved with application evaluations should be given the opportunity to discuss conflict of interest and current handling procedures before and after application evaluations, in order to raise suggestions for ways to improve the work,
• the Conflict of Interest Policy should be included in the Instructions for Reviewers,
• the Conflict of Interest Policy should be communicated to Scientific Councils, councils, committees, the evaluation panel chair and evaluation panel members,
• handling procedures for grants that are evaluated entirely or partially without coordination by Scientific Councils or committees should include methods for managing conflicts of interest,
• the appointed official should play a central role in communicating the Conflict of Interest Policy when evaluations are conducted entirely or partially outside of evaluations coordinated by Scientific Councils or committees,
• it should be made clear during evaluation panel meetings that questions regarding conflict of interest can be raised for discussion at any time, and
• the Chief Legal Adviser should be responsible, in comprehensive terms, for the Swedish Research Council’s management of conflict of interest issues.
8. Validity
This Conflict of Interest Policy takes effect on 1 May 2014, and will remain in effect until further notice. It hereby replaces previously adopted Rules for conflict of interest.
APPENDIX 3. STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AT THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL

REVISED 2016-11-09, MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL NR 6, 2016, APPENDIX 1

Strategy for Gender Equality at the Swedish Research Council

Goals for Achieving Gender Equality at the Swedish Research Council
In compliance with the Instructions Ordinance, 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 should:
1) achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its evaluation 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\(^1\) and receive the same average size of grants, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant.\(^2\)
4) include a gender equality perspective in each analysis and evaluation, where possible,
5) integrate a gender equality perspective in the 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 the other councils and committees (SCCCs).\(^3\) 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 organisation. 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; that the Swedish Research Council supports 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.

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\(^1\) Success rates for women and men refer to the percentage of applications approved among total applications received from women and men respectively.

\(^2\) Attainment of the goal must be assessed in the context of a sufficiently large number of decisions.

\(^3\) 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.
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 a 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 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 agency’s sphere of activity.

Laws, Ordinances, and Appropriation Directions
Equality between women and men is addressed by a body of laws and regulations, e.g. the Instrument of Government Chapter 1 Section 2 (part of the Constitution), the Discrimination Act (2008:467), 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) economic equality, (ii) equal division of power and influence, (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) 1§ 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 Report 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 3-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. Equal gender distribution in Swedish Research Council evaluation panels
“*The Swedish Research Council should achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its evaluation panels.*” (Goal 1)

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

Gender distribution should be considered before appointing the evaluation panels. Work involving equality should take a long-term perspective. This means, e.g. that in certain areas where 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 men. The same applies in instances where women are greatly underrepresented.

If the proposed composition of an evaluation panel falls outside of the 40% to 60% range, this must be specified in the decision-making material prepared for the Secretary General concerned. This material must
also include 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 applications 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 in the text of the calls, the evaluation criteria and types of evaluations should be considered from an equality perspective.

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

The Swedish Research Council’s evaluation handbooks must include written instructions for the evaluation 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 round of evaluations, the assistant research secretaries of the Swedish Research Council must discuss the above instructions with the evaluations panels. Before an evaluation 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 evaluation panels’ grant allocation proposals, from an equality perspective, to the respective Scientific Councils and the other councils and committees (S CCCs), commenting

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4 See footnote 1.

5 See footnote 2.
on possible gender disparities in success rates and average size of grants. 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 of the SCCCs and each type of grant. The average size of the grants must also be reported by gender. A summary of the results shall be included in the Annual Report of the Swedish Research Council. Presentations by the SCCCs to 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." (Objective 4)
"
A gender equality perspective should be included in every analysis and evaluation in so far as possible. This should also apply to memoranda, consultations (in response to white papers etc.), discussion and decision-making papers 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 motivation should be given.

A gender balance should always be strived for in evaluation panels and where external authors and experts are engaged.

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 should integrate a gender equality perspective in the council’s external communication." (Objective 5)
"
In the Research Council’s external communications a gender equality perspective shall be integrated 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 should be gender-neutral 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: APPROVALS, AND GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE

The administrative organisation\(^1\) has the responsibility to ensure that the research project complies with the terms and conditions established by Swedish law.

The applicant (project leader) has the responsibility to acquire all necessary 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 approvals 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 and that research conducted with funding from the Swedish Research Council adheres to good research practice. For applications to the Swedish Research Council the following applies:

- Approvals should not be sent to the Swedish Research Council.
- 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.
- The applicant and the administrative organisation confirms by signing the application that necessary permits and approvals are in place at the start of the project, e.g. concerning the ethical review and that the project will be conducted in accordance with Swedish law.
- The project leader and the representative of the administrative entity confirms, when they accept the terms and conditions of the funding decision, that they take responsibility for acquiring necessary approvals.

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\(^1\) 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 finances more than one-tenth of the research carried out at Swedish higher education institutions. Only direct government appropriations fund a larger share. The Swedish Research Council 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.

SEK 6.4 billion for research in 2017

In 2017, the Swedish Research Council paid SEK 6.4 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 5 804 applications during 2017. Of these, 1 044 applications have been granted.
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 and transparent manner.

A total of 844 researchers served as members of review panels in 2017, with 45% 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 210 employees, and is divided into five departments – the departments for research funding, research policy, research infrastructure, communication and administration.
APPENDIX 6. REVIEW PANEL FOR FULL APPLICATION

The chair is indicated with an asterisk*

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<td>Andrea Frilling*</td>
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APPENDIX 7. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL PERSONNEL

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