

Natural sciences and engineering research proposals in the Academy's September 2016 call: summary of reviewer feedback

Scientific quality

Majority of the review panels identified excellent or outstanding proposals, which were also found to be competitive in an international comparison. However, the quality of the proposals varied significantly depending on the field of research.

To improve the quality of the proposals, many panels highlighted the importance of **including sufficient scientific detail in the proposal**. This is particularly important for receiving a high grade in the items 1.1 (*scientific quality*) and 1.2 (*feasibility*) in the review form. Especially the description of the implementation of the work was often insufficiently detailed, and this was reflected in the *feasibility* grade. A clear description of the novelty and innovativeness of the proposed research was a prerequisite for receiving a high grade in the *scientific quality* part.

Competence, collaboration, and mobility

Several panels were impressed by the many highly networked and internationally-oriented applicants. However, the panelists often raised the concern regarding **non-specific description of collaborators and their roles in the research work**, and pointed out that simply providing a list of collaborators is not sufficient. Emphasis should also be placed on **describing the planned mobility clearly and in sufficient detail** with support letters from the mobility hosts as appendices in the proposal. Furthermore, the panelists would like to encourage especially early-career researchers to spend longer periods of time abroad rather than just few weeks/months.

Additional feedback

- The applicants should prepare the research plan and appendices according to the Academy's guidelines.
- The applicants should include only published and accepted papers - not submitted ones - in the publication list.
- The applicants should place emphasis on describing clearly and properly the state-of-the-art, management and organizational aspects, research methods, research hypotheses and objectives in the proposal.
- The applicants should carefully consider panel feedback from previous years in case of resubmitting a proposal on the same or similar topic.
- The applicants are encouraged to discuss the proposal with colleagues before submission. This is particularly important for younger applicants with limited experience in applying for research funding.
- The applicants should state out possible connections between different proposals (e.g. postdoctoral applicant is planned to be hired in an Academy project) in the proposal.