



**Natural sciences and engineering
research proposals in the Academy's
September 2017 call: summary of
reviewer feedback**



ACADEMY OF FINLAND

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 within the panels and among the fields of research.

To improve the quality of the proposals, many panels highlighted the importance of **including sufficient scientific details 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. **A clear description of the novelty and innovativeness of the proposed research**, which should include ambitious and innovative ideas and directions, was a prerequisite for receiving a high grade in the *scientific quality* part. Notably, **the description of the implementation of the work was often insufficiently detailed**, and this was reflected in the *feasibility* grade. Here, incorporation of possible preliminary results in the proposal could be helpful.

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 research team and collaborators and their roles in the research work**, and pointed out that simply providing a list of collaborators is not sufficient. Furthermore, in several fields of research the panelists found that the involvement of industrial partner(s) could have been better described and justified.

Many panels encouraged the applicants for the Academy Research Fellow and Postdoctoral Researcher posts to address in the proposal their **level of independence and how the post would advance their career**.

Many panels pointed out that international mobility consisting of longer research periods in world-class teams is important especially for early-career researchers. In the proposal **the planned mobility should be described clearly and in sufficient details** accompanied with invitation letters from the mobility hosts as appendices.

Additional feedback

- The research plan and appendices should be prepared according to the Academy's guidelines so as to facilitate systematic panel review.
- The publication list should include only published and accepted papers – not submitted ones.
- The applicants should place emphasis on describing clearly and properly the state-of-the-art, impact of the research, management and organizational aspects, research methods, research hypotheses and objectives in the proposal.
- The applicants should present a clear and justified budget.
- Depending on the nature of the project, ethical aspects, open science, and data management can be of pronounced significance. In those cases, the panelists encouraged the applicants to pay more attention to these issues.
- The applicants are encouraged to discuss the proposal with colleagues before submission. This is particularly important for early-career researchers with limited experience in applying for research funding.