



Principles of Good Practice in Peer Review



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Forum on Evaluation
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Core Principles – one of the actions of the ESF MO Forum on Peer Review

International Conference in Prague, “Peer Review, its Present and Future State”
Czech Research Foundation, ESF and EuroHORCs as a starting point (2006)

MO Forum on Peer Review: Sharing of Practices in International Peer Review

- 3 Priority areas identified

1st Workshop of the MO Forum on Peer Review, 10-11 March 2008 in The Hague,
Core Principles and 3 topics discussed:

- Peer Review standards across borders and cultures
- Reviewing specific types of proposals
- International Peer Review and the sharing of resources at the European level

Follow up:

Action Plan distributed to MO's in July 2008

- Peer Review – in the ESF Roadmap of Actions to help build the ERA
- 7-8 October Meeting MO Forum on Peer Review, new members are joining, Implementation of the ActionPlan is on the agenda



Core Principles of Peer Review for Research Funding

If peer review did not exist, someone would have to invent it

Peer Review and grant awarding procedures: key to the quality of our performance as research organisations and of our image in the scientific community

No alternatives to Peer Review

- hand outs proportional to 'size' of research institution – unrelated to quality and inflexible to change
- Elected groups of respected scientists agree allocations – danger of nepotism, bias, and hidden bias
- Throw dices

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Peer Review is equipped for:

- Recognising quality
- Responding to change
- Organising checks and balances
- Inspiring trust, displaying natural justice
- While still being cost-effective



Peer Review - Challenges faced

- imperfect, so easy to attack
- shortage of money, peer review gets the blame for difficult decisions
- applicants will often rationalize funding refusals as a failure of peer review system rather than their own shortcomings
- burden on peer reviewer and the funding system



Core Principles of Peer Review

- To use for Pan-European peer review and standards
- Setting standards and benchmarking national scientific communities in Europe
- Enabling to operate in a global context



Core Principles of Peer Review

- To use as a benchmark when organizations work collaboratively together or develop their national peer review system
- They should not be seen as rigid rules
- but be interpreted sensibly according to the specific circumstances of each funding competition



Core Principles and the ESF Peer Review Guide

- Introduction and structuring framework for a Peer Review Guide
- The guide will be framed around the Core Principles of PR
- And developed as a document in progress
- Structured around modules and reflecting individual practices
- To be used for the sharing information, comparing procedures across organisations, developing practice guidelines and recommendations



Core Principles of Peer Review

Actions: To discuss and agree on the set of main principles for each peer review process

And to share practices on issues of primary importance

Aims:

- to ensure fairness and quality of the process
- to improve efficiency through standardization
- To facilitate engaging reviewers across borders (national, interdisciplinary, etc)



Five Principles for PR to agree on: QuITAC

- Quality
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Appropriateness for purpose
- Confidentiality



Quality

- Quality of the Peer Review Process itself (monitoring)
- Peer selection
- Peer Behaviour: criteria used and ways of working



Impartiality

- Consistency of approach (but flexible as appropriate)
- Proper handling of possible conflicts of interest
- Clear criteria for peer selection which avoid bias
- Clear criteria which are relevant (may include strategic factors)



Transparency

- Funding scheme objectives, criteria and process are clear to applicants and others
- Reviews provided in anonymous form as feedback to applicants
- Applicants know why application succeeded or failed



Appropriateness for purpose

- Peer Review is appropriate for the type of work, uses appropriate selection methods
- Effort (time & cost) is proportionate to cost and complexity of proposed work
- Avoids multiple assessments of a proposal by different funders



Confidentiality

- Proposals are treated in confidence by funders and reviewers



Core Principles of Peer Review

Guidelines, and not rigid rules



Discussion

Core Principles of Peer Review:

- also offer a framework for the Evaluation of Research
- and for evaluating Funding Schemes

Thank you for your attention

More information: www.nwo.nl

The logo for the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), featuring the letters 'NWO' in a stylized white font with a red swoosh above the 'O'.

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