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

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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

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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

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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)

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Five Principles for PR to agree on: QuITAC

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

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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

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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](http://www.nwo.nl)