Concept workshop „Review Processes"

This workshop addresses young researchers, ideally a group from a similar field, who want to understand the logic of peer review processes. The workshop presents different review strategies and background information from the perspective of research funders. The participants need to prepare short [mock] applications and act as reviewers in two panel meetings. By "playing" the process of a peer review meeting (and making all the mistakes) the participants learn on the example how peer review works, about its strength and shortcomings. The profit twice: as future applicants they will be able to address their specific review audience in a much more specific way, and in their role as future reviewers they collect insights that will help them to make peer review work better.

Preparation for workshop

(deadline three weeks before workshop)

1) One page (max.) application for fictional project (pdf)
2) Short presentation for this project

Two weeks previous to workshop

1) Send out all applications to all participants
2) Prepare for panel meeting (select best two applications)

| Workshop "Review Processes" PLACE DATE | |
|---|---|
| 09:00 am | Welcome session<br><br>Expectation<br>General information |
| 09:30 am | Group discussion<br><br>How did you prepare the review?<br>How useful was the information provided by the applications?<br>Describe your feelings regarding process and group situation. |
| 10:00 am | Information<br><br>The logic of the review process |
| 10:30 am | Group discussion<br><br>Perspectives - Frustrations & reasons of applicant, reviewers and funder |
| 11:00 am | Practical exercise<br><br>Panel Meeting I – selection for presentation |
| 12:30 am | Group discussion<br><br>How did you feel during discussion?<br>What do you think about the result?<br>Did you feel being biased / unfair at any point? |
| 01:00 pm | Lunch break |
| 02:00 pm | Information<br><br>How are reviewers found and selected?<br>Observations from review processes. |
| 02:30 pm | Practical exercise<br><br>Panel Meeting II – Personal presentations |
| 04:00 pm | Information and Group discussion<br><br>Preparing for being a reviewer yourself |
| 04:30 pm | Summing up the day and feedback |

| | |
|---|---|
| 05:15 pm | End of workshop |

[Fictitious] Call for Funding Program „Science-Starters" INSTITUTION

The INSTITUTION wants to give young postdoctoral researchers up to five years after PhD the opportunity to optimize their chances for winning a professorship at their favourite institution with a small and innovative "kick-off project". Applicants can submit proposals for projects that demonstrate their unconventional, yet strategic thinking and gives an outlook on what would be their research agenda as a professor.

Criteria of the program

- Personal qualification of the applicant
- Excellence of research idea
- Originality and innovation of the kick-off project
- Match between planned research agenda and strategy of institution

The proposed kick-off project should have a duration of up to 18 months and a flexible budget of up to 150.000 Euro. For the first step of the review process the INSTITUTION asks for a 1-page summary of the project, containing the most relevant information. There are no specific guidelines, structuring and layout of this application lies in the hands of the applicant.

The two-step review process consists of 1) a panel meeting of 14 international and interdisciplinary experts from various fields of the life sciences and 2) a personal presentation of up to three selected projects.

Documents to be submitted

- 1-page Application (in English)
- Curriculum Vita
- List of max. five most relevant publications

The presentations will be 5 min. followed by 10 min. of discussion with the panel.

Deadline **DATE**

Send your application (PDF) to:

**CONTACT, INSTITUTION**

**MAIL: NAME@mail.com**

**Comment to participants of the workshop:**

Please prepare a 1-page application according to this [virtual/non-real] call until **DATE**. If you do not feel comfortable with sharing any real information, feel free to provide fictitious information. All documents are exclusively used to create a realistic review situation during the workshop.

Please treat all information you receive as a "reviewer" confidential and destroy/delete the documents immediately after the workshop.

The call is deliberately unusual and difficult to prepare for. If in doubt, get creative. The more "mistakes" the participants make, the more opportunities we will have for learning during the workshop. Please treat other participants with respect and contribute to an inspiring and fun atmosphere. Feel as relaxed as possible towards "mistakes" you made in your application, but stay self-caring and indicate possible disrespectful comments of others.

While review processes are always planned to be rational and reasonable, we will also discover the influences of emotions and personal attitudes and opinions.

**Instructions for your role as a reviewer**

Consider the following criteria

- Scientific quality and potential of the application
  - Quality of the long-term strategy for research agenda a professor
- Academic potential of the applicant
- Originality and innovation
- Match of applicant and (strategy of) institution
- Clarity of application

Be prepared to indicate 2-3 favourite applications at the beginning of review panel I and give a short statement with your main arguments.

Considerations to prepare for workshop (please take notes!)

- Observe your workload, time-management, and organization of your pre-review.
- Observe your feelings towards the individual application.
  - What causes these feelings?
  - How much do they influence your opinion?
- Observe potential biases.

**Topics for workshop**

1) Review process in funding organizations – a short overview
   - Written review / panel meeting / combinations
   - balance time / quality / costs (the magic triangle)
   - national / international reviewers
   - female reviewers
   - differences between research fields

2) The logic of the review process
   - Structures of funding organizations
     o More money – more applications – more reviewers
     o Image of funder / prestige of third party money / overheads
     o Bureaucracy / transparency / professionalism
     o Board vs. Office – review decision vs. suggestion
   - Review tools (advantages and limitations)
     o Direct internal decision
     o Quick assessments
     o Written review
     o „Colleges"
     o Panel meetings
     o Presentations (individual / panel)

3) How reviewers are found and selected

   - Reviewer selection pre- vs. post-deadline
   - Previous contacts vs. „outsiders"
   - Quality of reviewer (written vs. Panel)
   - Impact of the specific criteria of a call
   - „Professional" reviewers

   a) Panel meeting I – Selection of presentations (practical exercise)
      Name two favourite applications
      Discuss all applications from top downwards
      Three slots for presentations

4) Observations from review process

   - Overload of work
   - Serious effort
   - Travelling
   - Expectations of funding agency
   - Ethos and salary
   - What makes a review attractive for a reviewer?

   b) Panel meeting II – Presentations of selected projects (practical exercise)
      Presentation 5 min

Discussion 10 min
Discussion without applicant 5 min

Three presentations

Final discussion and funding decision
Discussion as for Panel Meeting I

5) The feelings of reviewers and their impact on the review process

- Individual
    - Sincere curiosity
    - Boredom
    - Enthusiasm for (own) field of research
- Group situation
    - Anxiety
    - Need to secure status
    - Insecurity regarding own competence and decisions
    - Overwhelm
    - Fun

6) Preparing for being a reviewer yourself

- Conscious decision
    - Why do I review?
    - For whom do I review?
        - Institution
        - Program
    - What is my benefit?
        - Insight
        - Learning
        - Contacts
        - Prestige
    - How much time do I invest?
    - My quality standarts
    - Political impact – „professional reviewing"?
- Biases
    - Feeling biased – the subtle influences