Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Safeguarding Excellence in Basic Research

The Role of Independent Peer Review

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How do we assess scientific excellence?

Main Review Criteria

Quality of the Project

- originality, novelty, timeliness
- expected knowledge gain

Objectives and Work Programme

- clear working hypothesis, focus
- realistic schedule
- feasibility, adequate methodology

Applicants' Qualifications

- experience
- publication record
- scientific independence *(for individual person funding)*

Work and Research Environment

- choice of institution
- equipment
- support of the host institution *(for individual person funding)*

Selecting the right reviewers

Each proposal needs the right expertise

Selected by the responsible DFG programme directors of Scientific Affairs

01 Scientific fit

Topic, theoretical approach and methods

02 Expertise across borders

Researchers in Germany and internationally

03 Independence

Relevant connections and possible conflicts checked

No static reviewer pool: suitable experts are identified for each proposal

From review to funding decision

REVIEW

External peer reviewers

- Assess scientific merits
- Provide written reports

EVALUATION

Elected review boards

- Examine reviewers and reports
- Compare and prioritise proposals

DECISION

Joint Committee

- Interdisciplinary comparison
- Final funding decision

Before the final decision: an independent check of compliance with procedural rules.

Safeguarding independence and fairness

Conflicts of interest

Disclose connections; exclude participation where required

Confidentiality

Protect proposal documents and reviewer identities

Bias awareness

Guidance for reviewers and committee members

Procedural assurance

Independent checks before the final funding decision



Independent peer review and scientific freedom

Reflections from DFG's experience in basic research

Independent peer review can help support the long-term potential of basic research



Scientific judgement

Expert assessment of scientific merit and potential

Independent procedures

Clear criteria, safeguards and distinct responsibilities

Freedom to explore

Space for research questions with uncertain outcomes



Thank you!

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