

Guidelines for referees assessing grant applications

Commercialisation Project – Verification

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1. About Application Processing

The purpose of the Research Council's commercialisation support is to contribute to the use of publicly funded research through increased commercial exploitation and/or societal innovation.

The purpose of verification support is to mature and validate new technologies from the laboratory to relevant application environments. A verification project shall reduce the project's uncertainty relating to technology and the market. The goal of the completed verification project is to clarify the most critical questions and uncertainties so that the next step in the commercialisation process is triggered.

To be eligible for funding, the project must be based on research results from publicly funded research by approved research organisations. In addition, the project must represent a technological breakthrough or significant improvements compared to existing knowledge or state-of-the-art. The project must also have the potential to form the basis for new products, processes or services.

The call is aimed at approved research organisations, their technology transfer offices (TTOs) and start-up companies originating from approved research organisations, a limited group of applicants, and primarily at new projects that have not previously received commercialisation funding from the Research Council. The following exceptions apply to this:

- projects that have received qualification funding
- projects that have previously received verification support and can demonstrate good progress, but where there is a need for further verification beyond the previous verification project

Any new application will be assessed in relation to the previously granted verification project and whether further funding is considered justified.

The call is open to all thematic areas, and the project may be at TRL level 2–7 (Technology Readiness Level), in line with the scale used in the EU.

For further information, see:

- [The call for Verification Projects 2026](#)
- [The Commercialisation Project webpage](#)

We accept and process applications on a continuous basis. The portfolio board will make decisions at regular intervals, and applicants will be notified as soon as possible.

About the experts' assessment

Applications for the verification call will be processed in a new system from 2026. You can find important information on this webpage: [Evaluation guidelines page](#). We also recommend watching the two guidance videos linked on this page the first time you assess an application in the new system.

Experts enter into an agreement with the Research Council of Norway to conduct assessments and declare their impartiality for each application that is evaluated. The document "[Impartiality in Administrative Proceedings](#)" provides more information.

Applications are individually assessed by experts ("evaluators" in the new application processing system), who form part of a panel together with other panel members assessing the same application. The individual assessments are submitted via "My Page" on the Research Council's website. Experts typically have 1–2 weeks to assess an application. Once a panel member (expert)

has submitted their individual assessment on “My Page”, they will gain access to the submitted individual assessments from the other panel members for the same application.

An overall average score will be calculated for each application. The assessments, in anonymised form, will be shared with the applicant to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

In the new application processing system, the roles of “panel chair” and “panel members” have been introduced, and panel meetings may be conducted in certain cases. More information about this is provided in the following sections.

If no panel meeting is held for an application, the individual assessments from the panel members (scores and written comments) will be shared with the applicant without any editing of the text.

If clarification is needed in the final assessment, the case officer may return the application to the panel member with comments requesting clarification.

About the Panel Chair

If a panel meeting is required, one of the experts will take on the role of “panel chair”. The panel chair leads the discussion of each application during the meeting, records the agreed scores and the consolidated assessment, and submits it.

If further review or clarification is needed in the final assessment, the case officer may return the application to the panel chair with comments requesting clarification.

About Panel Meetings

Applications with an average score of ≥ 3 based on individual assessments, but which do not qualify for funding decisions made on a rolling basis, and where the standard deviation for one or more sub-scores is 1 or higher, will be discussed in a panel meeting. See the next section for more information on score thresholds that qualify for funding decisions made on a rolling basis.

If a panel meeting is required, the case officer will contact you to arrange a meeting time. Meetings will be held digitally. During the meeting, the experts agree on a final score and assessment text, which is included in the decision letter to the applicant.

Application Processing (with reference to the call text)

“Applications that meet the formal requirements and are within the scope of the call will be submitted to a panel of at least three panel members for assessment. The panel members will make their individual assessments of the application and award a mark per criterion.

The grading scale for the criteria ranges from 0 to 5, with 5 being the best. See information about the new grading scale. After the panel members have made their individual assessments, the Research Council calculates an average of the marks awarded per application.

Thresholds for marks

- *Applications with an average mark of ≥ 4 , and no partial mark ≤ 3 , will be awarded on an ongoing basis within the framework of the announced amount, without being considered in a joint panel meeting.*
- *Applications where the average mark according to the individual assessments is ≥ 3 but does not qualify for continuous award, and the standard deviation for one or more partial marks is 1 or higher, will be considered in a panel meeting.*
- *We will continuously reject other applications that are not covered by the points above.*
- *If the available budget for the last allocation point is lower than the amount applied for from eligible applications, priority will be given to those that contribute to the dissemination of topics, diversification across research institutions and regions, a better gender balance (with regard to the project manager) in the active portfolio, and that are most sustainable with regard to climate, the environment and society. Priority will be given to applications based on a mark (integer).*

Please note that there may be different processing times for different applications, and that the capacity of our referees and case officer may mean that the applications are not processed in the order in which they are received.

Portfolio assessment and decisions by the portfolio board

Management will assess the extent to which the application satisfies the requirements and the thematic, academic and/or structural guidelines described in the call, and make a recommendation to the portfolio board.

The portfolio board makes decisions on allocation or rejection based on a portfolio assessment, the purpose of which is to identify the applications that best meet the objectives, guidelines and priorities of the call as a whole.

Feedback on the Application

You will receive feedback in the form of a decision letter. The letter contains written assessments, grades and a reason for the decision. We process the applications on an ongoing basis and make decisions on allocations and rejections on a regular basis, until there are no more funds left. We will close the call for proposals when we are sure that the remaining available funding will be allocated to the applications we have received at the relevant time. Applicants who have created an application will be notified one week before the call closes.

2. Guide to the Assessment Criteria

The experts assess each application based on the content of the application form and approved attachments. It is your professional judgment, based on your academic background, experience, industry and market understanding, that should form the basis for the evaluations. Information that is only provided via links in the application is not part of the project description and should not be given weight in your assessment. If you consider any information to be missing, you can point this out in your evaluation.

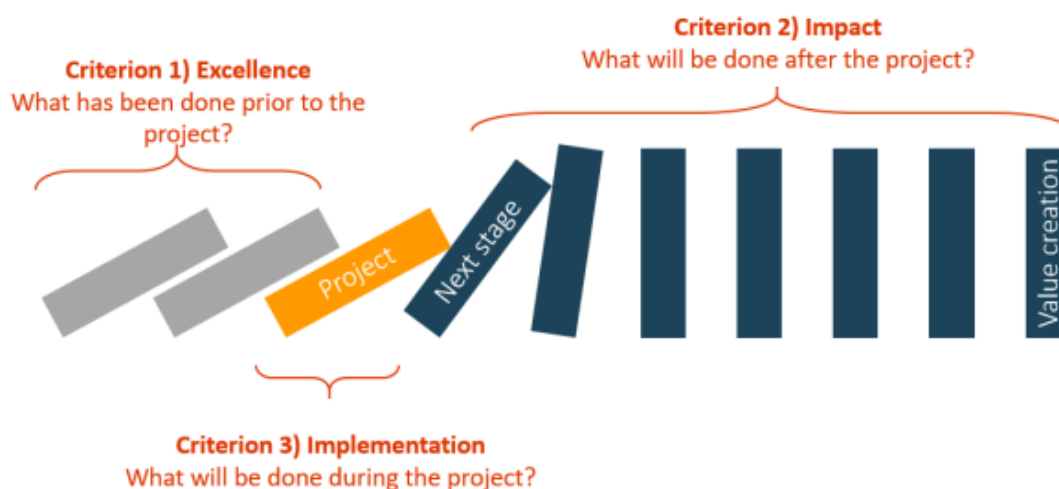
Applications are assessed on the basis of the application form and approved attachments seen in relation to the criteria 1) Excellence, 2) Impact and 3) Implementation. A mark, and the grounds on which the mark is awarded, must be given for each of the criteria. Each criterion must be assessed on the basis of the following scale of grades:

Mark	Defining characteristics
5	The proposal addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in an excellent manner. Compared with relevant work, it is among the top 15%.
4	The proposal addresses the criterion very well. Compared with relevant work, it is among the top 16–30%.
3	The proposal addresses the criterion well. There are some shortcomings, but they do not significantly impede the success of the proposed project.
2	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are weaknesses that could significantly impede the success of the proposed project.
1	The criterion is inadequately addressed.
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

The grade 0 corresponds to grade 1 in the scale of marks in the old system.

Further information on the new grading scale in the new application system is available on this webpage: [More information on the new grading scale](#)

The application must clearly specify what has been done prior to the project, what will be done during the project, and what is expected to happen after the project has been completed. This is reflected in the assessment criteria and can be illustrated as a domino effect, with each stage triggering the next. Criterion 1 is an assessment of whether the project has a robust starting point. Criterion 2 is an assessment of whether this is of commercial interest and can contribute to value creation. Criterion 3 is an assessment of whether the project activities will contribute to triggering the next stage of the commercialisation process.



1) Excellence

In this section, the reasoning behind the application and any work carried out prior to the project are assessed.

This criterion assesses the extent to which the project is based on a sound foundation, the degree of novelty represented by the innovation, and the extent to which it addresses an identified need.

Criteria:

- The extent to which the objectives are clear and relevant to the purpose of the call.
- The extent to which the project is ambitious and will challenge the state of the art.

In the new application form, the headings for what should be described under this section are: Solidity (research results), Originality (the innovation), and List of references.

i. Research results:

- To what extent is the underlying research base adequately described, including what research projects and research results that justify the project application, and who and which approved research organisation is behind the research?
- To what extent does the application refer to what is discovered (new or different) and why these research results are important for a future product, process or service, and where on the TRL scale the project is positioned?

ii. Degree of innovation:

- To what extent is the innovation concept, what is new, and which needs or problems it can help solve in a new or improved way described, and how does it differ from existing solutions (state-of-the-art)?

iii. Reference list:

This may also include references related to other parts of the project description. The research results that constitute the core or unique aspect of the innovation must not be publicly available.

What are the potential shortcomings for this criterion?

There can be many types of shortcomings for this criterion, for example:

- inadequate description of concrete research results;
- inadequate knowledge of the state-of-the-art and the needs situation of potential customers;
- inadequate description of how the product/process/service represents significant improvements vis-à-vis the state-of-the-art;
- inadequate documentation (e.g. references to claims from potential customers).

Please note: These are just a few examples and not an exhaustive list.

2) Impact

In this section, the long-term plan must be assessed, in addition to the plans for what will happen after the project.

This criterion assesses the extent to which the project demonstrates a realistic understanding of the next steps following the completion of the project.

Criteria:

- The extent to which the plans to achieve the described impact are credible.
- The extent to which the planned results will contribute to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

In the new application form, the headings under this section are: Potential (market insight, areas of application, and societal impacts) and Knowledge sharing and exploitation (implementation plan and conditions for implementation).

i. Market insight and areas of application:

- To what extent have market insight ((the initial market need, target user segments, etc.) and areas of use, and the reasons why the results are commercially interesting and the commercial potential been accounted for? To what extent does the applicant refer to dialogue with relevant external actors?
- To what extent is the competition situation identified and accounted for?

ii. Strategy for realisation:

- To what extent have the main aspects concerning what will happen after the project been accounted for, including possible strategies and associated challenges, conditions and risks, investment needs, plans for additional funding, future needs for resources and expertise, plans for logistics and distribution, etc.
- To what extent is the various conditions that must be in place to support the possible strategies for realising the product, process and/or service – for example, different types of rights, regulatory issues, key stakeholders/partners, key resources, etc. described?

iv. Benefit to society and sustainability:

- How well described are the important societal challenges that the project seeks to solve, and the expected societal impacts of the project's results, including sustainability aspects?

What are the potential shortcomings for this criterion?

There can be many types of shortcomings for this criterion, for example:

- lack of a realistic understanding of the market and value chain;
- inadequate description of potential customer segments and needs situation;
- inadequate realisation strategy and risk analysis;
- inadequate calculation of market sizes and income potential based on realistic assumptions;
- inadequate description of future investment and resource needs;
- Sustainable Development Goals are listed without an explanation being provided of how the project plans to help to achieve them;
- inadequate documentation (e.g. introductory dialogue with potential customers/relevant market players).

Please note: These are just a few examples and not an exhaustive list.

3) Implementation

In this section, the short-term plan is assessed, as well as what the project will do to trigger the next phase.

This criterion assesses the quality of the project plan, the project team and its partners, and whether the project is likely to trigger the next stage in the commercialisation process.

Criteria:

- The extent to which the project participants' expertise is complementary and that they as a whole have the necessary expertise.
- The extent to which the plan for the implementation of the work is clear and realistic with defined milestones, work packages and deliverables.

In the new application form, the headings are: Competence of the project team, Organisation (implementation plan, management and roles, risk), Work packages (description of the work package, milestones) and Budget.

i. Management, team and expertise:

- To what extent do the project participants collectively have the necessary expertise to implement the project?
- To what extent does the project have access to the necessary resources, have appropriate management and governance arrangements in place, is it strategically anchored, and have relevant risk been assessed?
- To what extent does the project have a plan for involving relevant external actors (investors, partners, clients, stakeholders, mentors, public and societal actors, etc.)?

ii. Project plan:

- To what extent does the project explain how the activities, milestones and resources put into the work packages as a whole contribute to achieving the objectives of the project?
- To what extent is the plan for implementing the work clear and realistic, with defined milestones, work packages and deliverables? Is it described what is considered a



successful outcome of the project and what the results are expected to trigger in the next step towards the market?

iii. Risks:

- To what extent are possible risks and the plan for managing any risks explained.

iv. Budget:

- To what extent are the budget and the financing plans realistic, cost-effective, and clearly rooted in the project's plans and resource needs?

What are the potential shortcomings for this criterion?

There can be many types of shortcomings for this criterion, for example:

- it is unclear what will be achieved by the end of the project/what must be obtained to trigger the next phase;
- the project plan entails little involvement by/alignment with relevant market players;
- the milestones are not measurable nor based on critical decision-making elements;
- the project team is not sufficiently dedicated or lacks critical expertise;
- the planned use of support is insufficiently cost-efficient.

Please note: These are just a few examples and not an exhaustive list.

3. Expectations for Application Assessments

The Research Council of Norway conducts a thorough assessment of all applications. The assessments carried out by external referees are an essential part of application processing and will be shared with the applicants in anonymous form to contribute to learning.

It is important that any information that is lacking in the application is pointed out in the comment's fields for the respective criteria. Each criterion should be given a mark on the basis of how well the application addresses the criterion's main question and the various sub-questions. If a poor mark is awarded due to a weakness or lack of clarity in the application, it must be explained why this is a shortcoming and how significant it is. Grounds must also be provided for good marks, with references to the content of the application. There must be a logical connection between the grounds provided, the mark and the descriptions given in the scale of marks.

Any shortcomings and ambiguities highlighted in the comment's fields form the basis for:

- 1) what must be improved in a new application if the current application is declined, or
- 2) what must be elaborated on in a revised application before the project can begin if the current application is granted funding.

The assessment process itself is meant to be of value to the applicant, regardless of whether the project is granted funding. Assessments and feedback provided by individual referees should not be considered the only correct interpretation. They are intended to give the applicant insight into what they have succeeded in communicating and how the project is perceived from a commercial and market perspective. Referees should therefore also include the following in the comments fields for the different criteria:

- proposals for critical questions that the applicants should look into in more detail;
- proposals for potential partners or mentors, and competitors they should keep an eye on;
- good advice relating to the specific market, or planned project activities.

To ensure that the feedback to the applicant is as useful as possible, we ask that you follow the following principles when justifying your ratings:

- Ensure that the written comments reflect the scores, in line with the description of the grading scale.
- Comments should reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the application.
- Use neutral, analytical, and unambiguous language. Write the feedback in Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, or English.
- Use grammatically correct, complete, and clear sentences.
- Avoid referring to people's age, nationality, gender, or other personal circumstances.
- Avoid comments that merely describe or summarise the application.
- Avoid expressing reservations about your own competence or making claims that the application is not credible.
- Avoid comparing with or referring to other applications you are currently assessing or have assessed previously.
- Use objective language and avoid disparaging comments about the project leader, the proposed research and development, or the subject areas covered by the application.

By following these principles, the feedback to the applicant will be constructive, regardless of whether the application receives high or low ratings.

Thank you for agreeing to assess the application.

The panel's consolidated assessment will be submitted to the portfolio boards responsible for making funding decisions and will also be shared with the applicant. Individual assessments from panel members may be shared with the applicant in cases where the panel has not prepared a joint assessment. The use of generative artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, in the evaluation process is not permitted.

As an evaluator for the Research Council, you have accepted our confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations. You are required to treat all information as confidential, to prevent unauthorised access to confidential information, and not to use such knowledge for any purpose other than the evaluation of applications.