Independent Research Fund Denmark (IRFD)

PANEL REVIEW GUIDELINES 2019

- Instructions to the international review panels under the supervision of Independent Research Fund Denmark
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1. Core Principles for the International Peer Review by IRFD

Independent Research Fund Denmark (IRFD) is committed to using international peer review as an integral part of its assessment procedure. The aim is to safeguard and further increase the quality and transparency of the assessment procedures of the fund.

This guide gives a brief introduction to the international panel review process at IRFD. Apart from international peer review panels, IRFD uses individual peer reviewers for certain funding instruments. In general, IRFD follows the international recommendations given in the Statement of Principles for Scientific Merit Review and manifested in the following core principles: Excellence, Impartiality, Transparency, Appropriateness for Purpose, Efficiency and Speed, Confidentiality and Integrity and Ethical Considerations.¹

To ensure the highest degree of transparency, these Panel Review Guidelines are accessible for the public on the internet, so as to provide applicants and stakeholders with detailed information on the panel review process.

2. Independent Research Fund Denmark

IRFD is a public, independent research funding body that strives to improve the quality and internationalisation of Danish research. Being committed to investigator-driven and bottom-up research activities that allow researchers to identify new opportunities and directions, IRFD supports research activities of the highest quality across all fields of science. IRFD grants are awarded through open competition and the overarching criterion of evaluation is scientific excellence. For that reason, it is generally considered very prestigious to be funded by IRFD.

IRFD funds research in Denmark based on the researchers’ own ideas, with an annual budget of EUR 157 million (2018). IRFD consists of a Board of Directors and five scientific research councils:

- IRFD | Medical Sciences
- IRFD | Natural Sciences
- IRFD | Humanities
- IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences
- IRFD | Social Sciences

Panels in relation to IRFD | Medical Sciences in 2019 (DFF-Research project 1 and 2):
- Public health/epidemiology
- Clinical science/organ physiology I
- Clinical science/organ physiology II

Panels in relation to IRFD | Natural Sciences in 2019:
- Mathematics, statistics and computer Sciences
- Physics and astronomy
- Chemistry
- Geology and physical geography
- Biochemistry and molecular Biology
- Biology

¹ European Science Foundation: European Peer Review Guide Integrating Policies and Practices into Coherent Procedures
Panels in relation to IRFD | Humanities in 2019:

- Panel 1
  (Literature; Media; Language; Linguistics; Art; Design and Architecture)
- Panel 2
  (Prehistoric and Classical Archaeology; Anthropology; Cultural Studies; Premodern and Modern History)
- Panel 3
  (Religion and Theology – both contemporary and classic areas; Philosophy and History of Ideas; Educational Studies)
- Panel 4
  (Psychology)

Panels in relation to IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences in 2019:

- Food science and technology
- Chemistry and chemical engineering
- Mechanics, materials and mechatronics
- Energy and energy systems
- Biomedical engineering
- Production technology and systems
- Civil engineering / urban planning

Panels in relation to IRFD | Social Sciences in 2019:

- Panel 1: Economics and business
- Panel 2: Sociology
- Panel 3: Political science and law

More information on IRFD can be found here. Please consult Appendix 4, where you will find a brief description of the research advisory system in Denmark.

3. Appointment and composition of review panels

The five scientific research councils are responsible for appointing the members and Chairs of the review panels. Each review panel will cover a well-defined scientific area, and members of the panel are international senior scientists (work place should be outside Denmark) appointed according to their scientific qualifications. Panel members can serve up to 3 years in a panel, if reappointed (all appointments, whether reappointments or new appointments, are made on a yearly basis, upon decisions by the scientific councils). A review panel is typically composed of 4 – 7 members, including the Chair.

The panel Chair is responsible for:
- coordinating the assessment process in cooperation with the office of IRFD
- chairing the panel meeting
- coordinating the final approval of the final joint assessments, e.g. ensuring that the grading is justified by and consistent with the comments made

4. Tasks and responsibilities of the review panel

The task of a review panel is to assess and grade all proposals assigned to the panel, in order to prepare for joint panel assessment of the proposals.

The panels are expected to assess the scientific quality and the qualifications of the applicant(s).

Panel members are not chosen as specialist reviewers within a narrow scientific field, but are expected to cover broader scientific fields and be open to assess proposals that are interdisciplinary. Since IRFD also receives proposals that are formulated across the normal boundaries between disciplines and institutions, it is important that reviewers do not define their scientific field too narrowly. It is therefore expected that panel members cover rather broad scientific areas and are prepared to assess proposals that may fall outside their specific fields of research.
However, if panel members consider themselves unqualified to assess a specific proposal, it is important that the Office of IRFD is notified as soon as possible so that appropriate measures can be taken, e.g. changing the assessor, referring the proposal to another panel or a different research council, referring it to joint assessment by two panels, or submitting the proposal for external assessment outside the panel. The specific case will be presented to the council for their consideration and approval. Some proposals for assessment will be interdisciplinary. The panels are expected to assess the part of the proposal that falls within the scientific field of the panel. Interdisciplinary proposals will hence be reviewed in more than one panel and may even be subject for review in two different councils’ panels.

Panel assessments serve as an important contribution to the council’s final decision regarding funding. This decision is based on the involved panels’ reviews and the council’s own assessment of all the individual proposals in competition with each other – some of which might not have undergone external review (this is the case for proposals to IRFD | Medical Sciences and IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences, which do not fall within those scientific fields announced in this year’s call, that are subject to external review). Other applications may have been sent to external review outside the panel, e.g. by (typically) two individual reviewers. This is typically the case, if a council member is involved in an application. Council members involved in applications are not allowed to have their applications reviewed in those specific panels, where they, at an earlier stage, have been actively involved in the council’s appointment of one or more panel members.

Included in the assessment by the council are also the applicant’s comments to the panel assessments and other criteria, which are not part of the panels' external review process, e.g. considerations with regard to the financial budget of an applied project and for instance to what extent the objective of the instrument is fulfilled. The council may therefore make a final decision different from the panel's recommendation. Please find information about the council’s assessment and assessment criteria in the call, page 28.

All panels are also expected to briefly discuss the overall panel review process for the benefit of the ongoing development hereof.

All members of review panels must respect the rules concerning confidentiality and conflict of interests

(Appendix 1)

5. The work of the panel

The work of the panel usually will be organised as follows:

- All proposals will be assigned to specific panel members in order for them to prepare draft assessments for the panel meeting. Each proposal is assigned to two assessors, who independently of each other prepare a draft assessment to be discussed at the panel meeting. The panel should base its assessment on the criteria listed in the assessment form. These criteria are a reflection of certain parts of the criteria described in the fund’s Call for Proposals Autumn 2018 and Spring 2019.
- At the panel meeting, all proposals and draft assessments are discussed. It is expected that panel members have read all proposals in depth in order to contribute to the panel discussion. As a preparation for the panel meetings related to IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences, all panel members are expected to indicate their top 25 % of the panel’s proposals (with the “top” defined as the best fourth of the batch assessed by the panel). Members of panels related to IRFD | Natural Sciences are expected to indicate their top 15 % proposals.
- A joint panel assessment for each proposal is prepared, if necessary after the panel meeting. Usually, the first assessor is responsible for preparing the final joint assessment, based on the meeting discussions and the final grades jointly decided by the panel during the meeting. The Chair of the panel performs the final approval of the joint assessments. The Chair is ensuring, that the grading is justified by and consistent with the comments made, and may add minor editorial/semantic corrections to the joint assessments.
The panel members are preferred to meet and discuss the proposals in Copenhagen. However, virtual (e.g. Skype/Skype for Business meetings may be considered, if the number of proposals and the relevant panel and its composition allow for this without compromising the quality of the panel output. In case of a virtual meeting, the office of IRFD will set up the meeting and participate to facilitate the process in the best possible manner.

The draft assessments made prior to the panel meeting in preparation of the final joint assessment will not be made available to the applicant. Only the final joint assessment will be presented to the applicant as part of a ‘right to reply’ process, and only this will be submitted to the fund. The applicants are allowed to correct factual errors or misunderstandings that they may detect in the assessments of their proposals. The composition of the panel will be disclosed to the applicants, and the names of any panel members, who have not participated in the discussion and grading of specific proposals due to a conflict of interest in relation to such proposals, will be explicitly stated. The review panel will not be involved in this process or in any feedback from or to the applicants. As the final joint assessments are the work of the entire panel, the applicant will of course not receive information about the identity of the assessors.

6. Assessment instructions

Conflicts of interest – disqualification to review
As soon as the panel has access to the proposals, panel members must check if they have any conflict of interest in relation to any of the proposals. This applies to the proposals assigned to assessors as well as any of the other proposals, which the panel is to assess. If a conflict of interest exists, the proposal in question can either be assigned to another member of the panel or be reviewed by another procedure than a panel review, i.e. individual external review outside the panel. This will be resolved by the Chair and the office of IRFD. Please consult the rules regarding conflicts of interest in Appendix 1. Panel members who become aware of a conflict of interest at any point in time – or are in doubt – should contact the office immediately for advice.

Distribution of proposals within the panel
If a panel member does not agree with the distribution of proposals, e.g. due to a lack of expertise in a specific research area, the panel member should contact the Chair and the office of IRFD as soon as possible in order to ask for a reassignment of the proposal (please refer also to chapter 4).

Assessment criteria (Appendix 2)
Proposals consist of an application form, a project description, CVs and lists of publications, collaboration statements, and confirmation from host institution. The panel is expected to prepare its assessments primarily on the basis of the project description, the CVs and publication lists of the applicant and the project participants. The panel must disregard any portions of the project description that exceeds the permitted maximum length. Enclosures not required by the fund should also be disregarded. The formal requirements can be found in the call, page 17 and 33 (DFF-Research Project 1 – general description and requested enclosures) and the call, page 18 and 33 (DFF-Research Project 2 – general description and requested enclosures).

The assessment form consists of the following three assessment sections:
A. Review of the scientific quality of the project and a corresponding grade
B. Review of the qualifications of the applicant(s) and a corresponding grade
C. Overall impression (conclusion) (no overall grade is given)

Please note that the panel should not take budget information into account, as analysing the budget requires thorough insight into the budgetary rules and is rather time consuming. Consequently, the applications’ budget details are not laid before the panel.

For each assessment section, a numerical grading (from 1 – representing the lowest grade to 7 – representing the highest grade, see below) and written comments should be provided.
It is important that the reviewers provide substantial written comments to each of the criteria. It is very important that the panel ensures that the grading is justified by and consistent with the comments made. Please note that the assessment form contains instructions on the preferred amount of text for each of the criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>The proposal is internationally outstanding and stands out with exceptional novelty, quality and innovativeness. It fully meets all scientific standards and excels many or all of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>The proposal is internationally excellent and it meets all scientific standards and excels some of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>A very good proposal demonstrating good quality. It generally meets scientific standards, but some points can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>The proposal is of good quality in terms of overall scientific standards, but has not been fully elaborated and needs some improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>The proposal meets some of the scientific standards, but needs significant improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>The proposal needs significant changes and improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>The proposal has serious flaws and does not meet the scientific standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel members should acquaint themselves thoroughly with the whole range of grades and the description of the grading scale before grading, in order to achieve a full and differentiated use of the grading scale. Please note that in terms of the grading of the proposals, the benchmark should not be the actual field of proposals within the panel, but an absolute grading where the benchmark is the international standard, as recognized by the panel. The ultimate grade of 7 should only be awarded if the proposal by the panel is considered to belong to the absolute world top 5%. Accordingly, the grades 6 and 5 should be awarded to proposals belonging to the world’s top 5-15%, respectively 15-25%.

At the panel meeting, it is important that the Chair and the panel members ensure that there is a common interpretation of the grading scale.

Panels related to IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences will be asked to identify the top 25% proposals. Panels related to IRFD | Natural Sciences will be asked to identify the top 15% proposals (H proposals) and exclusively for these make use of grades with one decimal.

The five scientific research councils will convene in April 2019 to discuss the proposals based on the panel assessments, the comments from the applicants as well the council’s own assessment. Based on this the council will make the final funding decision. The panel will receive information about the funding decision by the council, and significant deviations from the panel’s advice will be explained.
General advice for a fair and effective assessment

Checklist – summing up a few internationally well-established recommendations on peer reviewing for a fair and effective assessment

| The assessment should always be well argued and avoid repetition of the project proposal |
| Reviewers should furthermore: |
| • provide an impartial, objective, fair and analytical assessment of the proposals, not a description of the work proposed |
| • avoid overly negative or personal phrasing |
| • formulate the assessment on behalf of the panel and avoid personal comments and references to ‘I’ |
| • always provide arguments to support observations |
| • take into consideration the assessment criteria listed in the two main categories in the assessment form |
| • make sure that a clear assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the proposal can be made by the comments in the assessment form |
| • acquaint themselves with the entire numerical grading scale and make sure it is used in a consistent way |
| • ensure that the grading is justified by and consistent with the comments made |
| • avoid taking other assessment criteria into consideration than the ones in the assessment form |
| • always treat resubmitted proposals as completely new proposals |

Other important notes and reminders before assessing the proposals

In Denmark, all PhD scholars are required to be part of a graduate school within their scientific field, which also provides them with a PhD supervisor. Therefore, the formal PhD supervision will rarely be described in detail in the proposal, and this should not detract merit from the proposal.

7. Office of the Independent Research Fund Denmark

Independent Research Fund Denmark
Office of the Independent Research Fund Denmark
Asylgade 7, DK-5000 Odense C
Phone: + 45 7231 8200
E-mail: DFF-opslag@ufm.dk
Homepage: www.dff.dk

Ministry of Higher Education and Science
Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education
Bredgade 40, DK-1260 Copenhagen K
www.ufm.dk/en
Appendix 1: Legal framework

The peer review process must be carried out in accordance with the following principles:

Anonymity, confidentiality and openness
According to Danish legislation, the joint panel assessments must be sent to the applicants as part of a right to reply process. In this process the composition of the panel will be disclosed to the applicants. Therefore, please note that you cannot be anonymous as a reviewer in Denmark.

Research plans and the personal data included in the proposals are confidential and should not be accessible for others than the reviewer, and must be disposed of immediately after the assessment process is completed. Confidentiality must also be maintained after the assessment process has been completed.

The public can request access to all documents in the public sector. However, there are some limitations in this respect, and each request for access to documents will be specifically reviewed by the office of IRFD.

Conflicts of interest and impartiality
Independent Research Fund Denmark follows rather strict guidelines for conflicts of interest in order to make sure that the assessment is carried out without - and cannot be suspected of - bias. According to the Danish Public Administration Act (see the extract below), reviewers must not have any vested interests in relation to the proposals or applicants that they are asked to assess.

Members of the panel are therefore asked to declare any specific interests they may have - be it personal, financial or professional, in the (outcome of the) proposal - including informing the office of IRFD if they have recently worked closely and/or published with the applicant or any member of the research group comprised by the proposal. Being disqualified in connection with one proposal does not imply that a panel member cannot participate in the panel as such. In general, the panel member will be able to participate in the assessment and rating of all other proposals under review by the panel. However, special rules apply if the number of proposals assessed by the panel is less than ten. If needed, the office of IRFD will assist with additional guidance and directions in relation to the relevant Danish legislation.

Extract from the Danish Public Administration Act:

Pursuant to Section 3(1) of the Danish Public Administration Act, a conflict of interest exists where:

1. The person concerned has a particular personal or financial interest in the outcome of the case or is or previously in the same case has been representative of someone with such an interest,
2. The spouse, relative or person-in-law of the person concerned in the direct line of ascent or descent or in the collateral branch as close as nephews and nieces or any other closely related person has a special personal or financial interest in the outcome of the case or represents any person with such an interest,
3. The person concerned participates in the management of or is closely related to a company, an association or another private legal person who has a special interest in the outcome of the case,
4. The case relates to a complaint of or the exercise of control or supervision of another public authority and the person concerned has previously participated in the decision with the relevant authority or in the carrying out of measures relating to the case, or
5. Other circumstances exist that are likely to lead to any doubt about such person’s impartiality.

No person disqualified in respect of any specific case will be allowed to decide, to take part in the decision-making or to otherwise assist in the consideration of the case in question. The relevant person must leave the conference room during the consideration of the case and may not extend any consultancy services to the persons participating in the consideration of the case or parts of the consideration of the case.

In addition to these rules the Danish Research Coordination Committee has laid down some detailed guidelines concerning disqualification, which can be accessed here.
Appendix 2: Assessment criteria

SCIENTIFIC QUALITY (including feasibility)

- Does the project description demonstrate that the project has a potential for scientific progress, innovation and originality (theoretically, methodologically and empirically)?
- Does the project represent innovative research rather than just being an expansion of current research?
- Does the project description make it clear that the project contributes to the internationalisation of Danish research?
- Does the project description contain:
  - a clear and well-defined problem statement and objective?
  - a description of the state of the art and/or the scientific challenges within the project’s research area, as well as of the project’s potential contributions in this regard?
  - a consistent and appropriate hypothesis?
  - a description of the theoretical and/or methodological basis, including an argumentation that the proposed activities are relevant in relation to this theoretical/methodological basis?
- If relevant to the project: Does the project description provide argumentation for the connection between the project’s hypothesis, theory and method?
- If relevant to the project: Is there an adequate description of the project’s empirical material or data foundation, including any pilot projects and/or any preliminary data?
- If relevant: Is there an adequate level of synergy between the individual elements of the project?
- For proposals to Independent Research Fund Denmark | Technology and Production Sciences, the following special criterion also applies: Does the project set out to solve a concrete problem, or does it have a clear application-oriented perspective?
- Have sufficient resources been allocated to the project, including scientific resources, staffing and access to the necessary facilities and equipment?
- Is there a realistic work schedule and timetable which considers e.g. the recruitment of any unnamed participants and the dissemination of the project’s findings?
- Does the project description account for project milestones and success criteria, and are they realistic?
- If relevant, are any ethical aspects adequately examined?

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE APPLICANT(S)

- Has the applicant documented:
  - the scientific qualifications necessary for carrying out the project?
  - a level of scientific production within the field that is necessary for carrying out the project?
  - sufficient research management qualifications for carrying out the project?
- Have the other key participants in the project documented the necessary scientific qualifications for carrying out the project?
- Does the project involve the participation of relevant researchers from Denmark and abroad, and if relevant, is there an adequate level of collaboration with business partners?
- Is there a strategy for the organisation and management of the project, including an account of the distribution of work between the involved researchers?
- Are any PhD and postdoc scholarships well integrated, and do they fulfil a clear function in the project?
Appendix 3: Remuneration and travel arrangements

Remuneration
Each panel member will be paid
- a basic remuneration of EUR 300 for being panel member
- plus EUR 30 for each proposal assessed by the panel
- plus an additional EUR 40 for each proposal where the specific panel member is first or second assessor

Additionally, the Chair of the panel will receive a fee of EUR 600 (0-20 proposals) or EUR 750 (more than 20 proposals).

Bank account details are to be entered into the Scientific Assessment Payment Form, and should be mailed to the office of IRFD. The form will be sent by e-mail. Your payment will normally be processed no later than a month after receipt of your payment form, provided that full and correct documentation of your bank account details has been received. The office of IRFD will process the payment separately from the reimbursement of travel expenses.

Travel arrangements by flight
Travels by flight will be paid for and booked by our travel department. Based on your declarations in the “meeting attendance form” provided by the office of IRFD, the travel department will contact you to ensure the proper planning and booking of your travel.

Reimbursement
To receive reimbursements, the receipts and documentation for expenses in connection with your journey must be sent to the travel department at rejser@ufm.dk within 14 days after completing the journey. If your employer has initially paid the journey, an electronic invoice should be sent to the travel department for reimbursement. Please note that the travel department is not able to pay invoices from third parties, i.e. invoices from your own travel agency that is sent to you or your institution and forwarded to the travel department, or sent directly from your travel agency to our travel department.

Accommodation
Accommodation will be booked and paid for by the office of IRFD. It is possible to make a reservation of up to two nights of accommodation (three nights if the meeting is a two-day meeting); one night before the meeting, from one meeting day to another, and one night after the meeting. Extra nights will be at your own expense.

Please do not hesitate to ask your contact person in the office of IRFD for further information.
Quick guide to official travel on behalf of
the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education

Making your travel arrangements

Before the journey:
As a traveller you are able to request a time of departure and return journey. This is to be declared in the meeting attendance form. The travel department is obligated to select the most expedient and economical mode of travel. As a general rule, economy class must be used.

● Flight booking:
All officials shall be entitled to the reimbursement of their travel expenses from the address of the official's authority to the place of the exchange (i.e. the address of the Host authority), by the most appropriate means of transport given the distance involved.

The travel department will contact you as soon as your meeting attendance form has been received by the office of IRFD.

It is important in the Scientific Assessment Payment Form to declare the following:
- Full name (as it appears in passport)
- Birthdate and account information (IBAN & SWIFT/BIC for faster reimbursements)

After having been in contact with you, the travel department will book and send you the time schedule and tickets by e-mail. If the travel department cannot find a trip that complies with your request, you will be contacted for the purpose of accepting another travel time.

● Train booking:
If you travel by train, you need to book and pay the tickets yourself for a future reimbursement. Train tickets must be booked on economy class.

During your trip
● If you need to change the booking, or if other issues occur during your journey, please contact the Agency’s travel agent Carlson Wagonlit Travel 24h service by phone: +45 3363 7777.

● Travel by taxi is refundable in connection with arrivals at/departures from airports/stations, when public transportation is not expedient. Local transportation is reimbursed on the basis of the receipt/documentation provided.

● In connection with the panel meeting and related activities, meals are included in the arrangement. Only light meals (up to an amount of 50 euro), during travel, will be reimbursed.

After your trip
● Expenses in connection with the official travel will be reimbursed on the basis of the receipts/documentation provided. As the office of IRFD as a general rule pays for accommodation, overall transport, meals in connection with the panel meeting and related activities, eligible expenses for the purpose of reimbursement cover:
- Local transport to/from the airport of departure and from/to Copenhagen Airport
- Light meals during travel and stay (up to an amount of 50 euro)
- Flight / train tickets (for the overall transport) in case our travel department has not been involved

For reimbursement the documentation must be send as an attached file (PDF format) to the travel department (rejser@ufm.dk) no more than 14 days after end journey. If your employer has initially paid the journey, an electronic invoice should be sent to the travel department (rejser@ufm.dk) for reimbursement.
Appendix 4: The Danish funding and advisory system for research

The Danish funding and advisory system for research consists of a number of councils and commissions which provide scientific advisory services and grant funds to research and innovation. The major advisory and funding bodies are briefly described below.

**Danish National Research Foundation** is an independent organisation with the objective to promote and stimulate basic research at the highest international level at the frontiers of all scientific fields. The Center of Excellence program is the main funding mechanism.

**Independent Research Fund Denmark** funds specific research activities within all scientific areas that are based on the researchers' own initiatives and that improve the quality and internationalisation of Danish research. The budget of the fund is approximately EUR 157 million in 2018.

**Innovation Fund Denmark**

Innovation Fund Denmark is a brand new funding body based on the three former funding organisations the Danish Council for Strategic Research, the Danish Council for Technology and Innovation and the Danish National Advanced Technology Foundation.

The Fund invests in the development of new knowledge and technology creating growth and employment in Denmark. The Fund focuses on societal challenges, strengthens research and increases innovation commitment within private companies. The budget of Innovation Fund Denmark is EUR 185 million in 2018.

The objective of the **Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy** is to further the development of Danish research to the benefit of society. The council advises the Government and the Danish Parliament on research issues at the general level.

**Funding instruments of Independent Research Fund Denmark**

IRFD consists of a Board of Directors and five scientific research councils:

- IRFD | Medical Sciences
- IRFD | Natural Sciences
- IRFD | Humanities
- IRFD | Technology and Production Sciences
- IRFD | Social Sciences

IRFD’s main task is to provide financial support to concrete and fixed-term research activities based on researchers’ own ideas. IRFD considers its primary task to support growth layer and the continued development within independent, researcher-initiated research. IRDF crucially emphasises that the professional research quality is maintained in the projects it supports.

IRFD offers the following categories of instruments this purpose:

- Research projects: Small projects (DFF-Research Project 1), as well as larger, joint research projects (DFF-Research Project 2) carried out by groups of researchers
- DFF-International postdoctoral Grant
- Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant
- Non-university research education (PhD)
- Other small and council specific instruments for networks, international research stays, journals and clinician scientist positions and pre-graduate scholarships.
The purpose of the Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant is to develop the qualifications and competencies of the best research talents, both nationally and internationally. The programme is seen as a launching platform for the elite to apply for funding at international research councils and foundations. Sapere Aude particularly focuses on strengthening the competitiveness of Danish researchers with The European Research council (ERC).

The 2017 legislation introduced the possibility of IRDF being able to award grants to concrete research activities within politically determined themes or instruments, when special funding has been provided for this purpose in the National Budget. Instruments used is DFF-Research Project 1 and 2.

**Listing of the current DFF calls**

**Assessment procedures of Independent Research Fund Denmark**

Proposals are processed according to the assessment flowchart below:

- Proposals for the instrument Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grants (which after an initial evaluation within the fund, have been qualified for the second round, see the assessment flowchart)
- A substantial subset of the proposals for DFF-Research Projects. See overview in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific council</th>
<th>DFF-Research Project 1</th>
<th>DFF-Research Project 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>No external review other than the standard requirements</td>
<td>All proposals: Panels/individual reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>No external review other than the standard requirements</td>
<td>All proposals: Panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>No external review other than the standard requirements</td>
<td>All proposals: Panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Sciences</td>
<td>Specific scientific areas: Panels</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and Production Sciences</td>
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<td>Specific scientific areas: Panels</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some applications may have been sent to external review outside the panel, e.g. by (typically) two individual reviewers. This is typically the case, if a council member is involved in an application. Council members involved in applications are not allowed to have their applications reviewed in those specific panels, where they, at an earlier stage, have been actively involved in the council’s appointment of one or more panel members.

**Standard requirements:**
In addition to this, IRFD always uses external review in connection with proposals where:
- A council member is applicant or a scientific participant in a proposal whose budget exceeds EUR 133,000, excl. overhead (1 mio. DKK)
- Council members are deemed disqualified for other reasons, or where the council, for other reasons, does not possess the necessary scientific expertise to consider the proposal.