

HOW TO WRITE FOR THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL

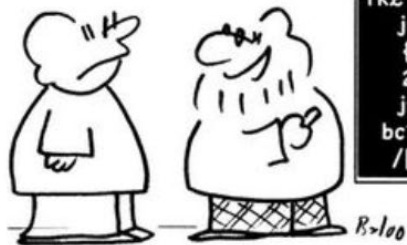


Research Support Office

Jeanette Bröms (jeanette.broms@umu.se)
Anders Wennström (anders.wennstrom@umu.se)



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/[π^{4.906i}] × bc^{n(3) kt30 = X}</sup>

**“It’s a foolproof formula for
writing grant applications.”**



Focus - Swedish governmental funding

Min. of Education
and Research

Swedish Research
Council (VR)

- Basic research
- Researcher initiated
- All scientific fields

7 billion/year

Some reoccurring VR-calls

- Research project grant
(march/april)
- Starting grant
(april)
- International postdoc
(February /April; September)

www.vr.se



What is VR looking for?

Vision:

*“The Swedish Research Council has a leading role in **developing Swedish research of the highest scientific quality**, thereby contributing to the development of society”.*



Content of the proposal

THE WHOLE APPLICATION

- Descriptive information
 - Titles, Abstract, Popular science
- Research description
 - Ethics, Sex and gender, **Research plan**
- Budget and research resources
- Publications
- Administrating organisation
- Review panels
- Participants
- CV

THE RESEARCH PLAN

-Max 10 A4

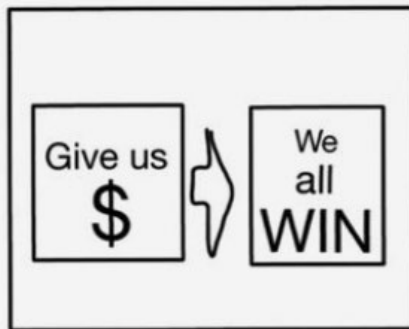
- Purpose and aims *
- State-of-the-art *
- Significance and scientific novelty *
- Preliminary and previous results *
- Project description *
- Independent line of research
- Equipment
- Need for research infrastructure
- International/national collaboration
- Other applications or grants

IF APPLICABLE

Purpose and Aims

“State the overall purpose and specific aims of the research project”

Create a "logic model"



Here is our
new simplified
logic model



Purpose and Aims



1/2 page
Short, dry description
of Purpose and Aims

1 page
Puts the Purpose and Aims
in perspective

Problematic

- Difficult to understand why this is important
- Not all reviewers know the area well
- Aims can be hard to grasp

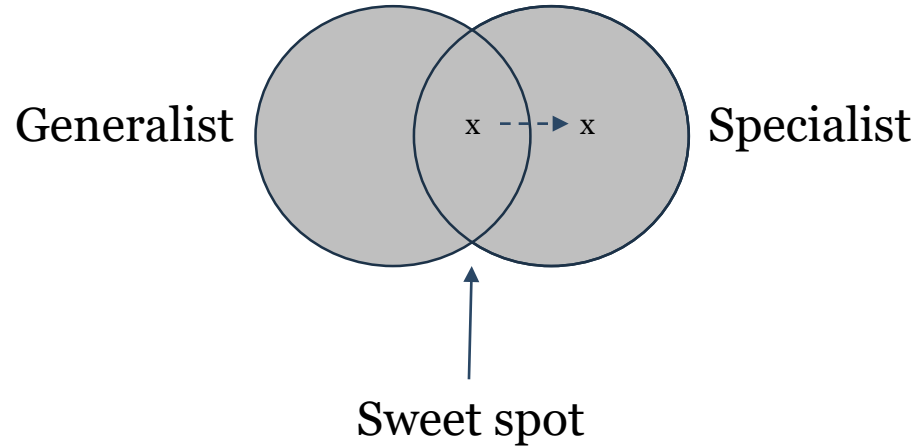
PREFERRED

Writing tips - NIH

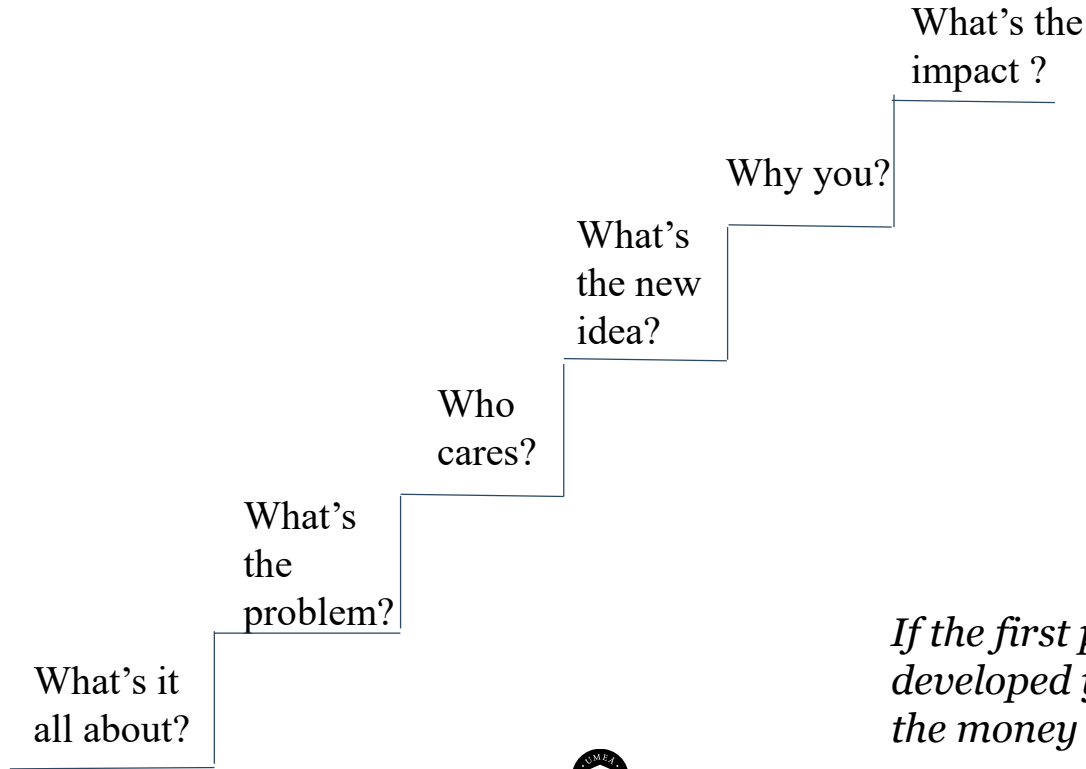
- Tell a story . . .
 - Build your argument
 - Help reviewers care
- Punctuate key points
 - Write the Aims first....and Last
 - You are writing a prose poem - use subheadings/bold key sentences that structure the argument
- Use a conceptual framework and model
 - Diagram cause-effect or temporal relations
 - Make the link between aims and products clear



Who to write for?



How to build your story



If the first page is not fully developed your chance of getting the money is reduced



A good example

The rationale behind this research project is that the progression of **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)** is intimately linked to **extrapulmonary manifestations** (i.e., decreased limb muscle, brain, and cardiovascular function). Extrapulmonary manifestations are currently **not dealt with optimally**, despite having a substantial **negative impact** on important clinical outcomes, including quality of life, health-care use, exercise intolerance¹, and **even life expectancy**.

To improve these manifestations, studies of healthy show that **high-intensity exercise is essential** for several physiological mechanisms, including muscle, brain, and cardiovascular function. However, achieving high-intensities is **challenging for most people with COPD** as increased ventilation during exercise causes them to stop exercising before their cardiovascular system or limb muscles are maximally stressed. This calls for **new exercise methods**. Together with my research collaborators, **we have developed a truly novel concept** of very short-duration high-intensity training, supramaximal HIT, consisting of 10 × 6 seconds cycling intervals¹⁰.

What

Importance

Challenge

Novel idea



How to use Aims and Objectives

AIM VERSUS OBJECTIVE

Aims

Long term

Few

Easy to grasp

Short description

Aim is the intention or the desired outcome	Objective is a specific or concrete goal
What you are going to achieve	How you are going to achieve it
Broad	Specific and Concrete
Can be divided into several objectives	Steps that are achieved to reach the aim

Objectives

Selected to reach aims/goals

Avoid too many details

Short and snappy

Easy measurable

What does a good Aim look like?

Make it simple:

The aim of this project is.....



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What does a good objective look like?

To reach the aim, I will focus on the following objectives:

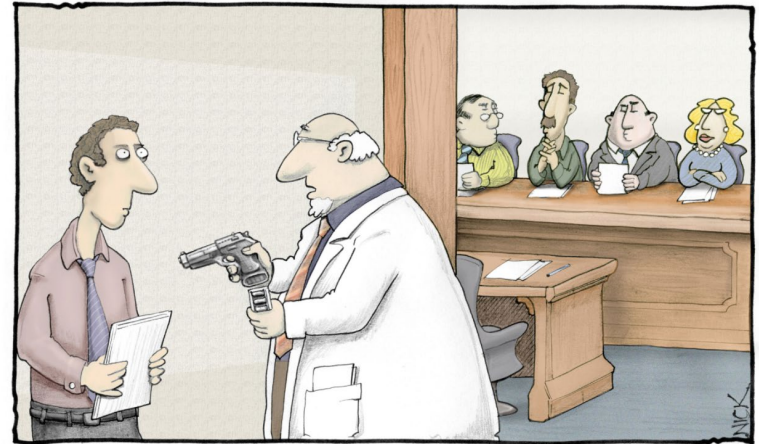
Bullet points!

Good ones

1. Determine
2. Establish
3. Describe
4. Quantify

Bad ones

1. Follow/study
2. Understand
3. Explore
4. Gain knowledge



"Change of plan. The policymakers say they're only willing to listen to the science if we can present our ideas in simple bullet-point format."



State-of-the-art

“Summarise briefly the current research frontier within the field or area covered by the project. State key references.”



Too many examples, old references, repeating yourself



Focus on what is relevant for your idea, include your publications





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Significance and scientific novelty

“Describe briefly how the project relates to previous research within the area, and the impact the project may have in the short and long term.

Describe also how the project moves forward or innovates the current research frontier.”



Background again, copy what has been said



State directly why novel and why a significant impact



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Preliminary and previous results

“Describe briefly your own previous research and pilot studies within the research area that make it probable that the project will be feasible.” “If no preliminary results exist, please state this.”

“State also whether the project contributes further to research and scientific results from a grant awarded previously by VR”



Excessive details on methodology



Include your published results also in S-o-t-a



Project description

- Theory and method
- Time plan and implementation
- Project organisation

Theory and Method

“Describe the underlying theory and the methods to be applied in order to reach the project goal”



Too much information provided, Too compact



Follow through with the objectives created on the first page
(preserve the nomenclature of objectives!)



Theory and Method - example

Objective 1. Estimation of the.....

Theory (2-3 lines to put it in context)

Methods

Sample size/statistics

Predicted outcome

Objective 2. XXXX.....



How to apply?

Start page Prisma



Prisma is an application system. Here you can apply for research grants and manage your funded grants. As a reviewer, this is where you find all the necessary information and your review tasks.

Swamid disabled

For technical reasons the login through Swamid in Prisma has been disabled from 23 August 2021 until further notice. Logging in with your username (e-mail) and password works for all accounts in Prisma. If you do not have a password, you can create one by clicking "Log in" and then "Forgot your password?".

Operating information

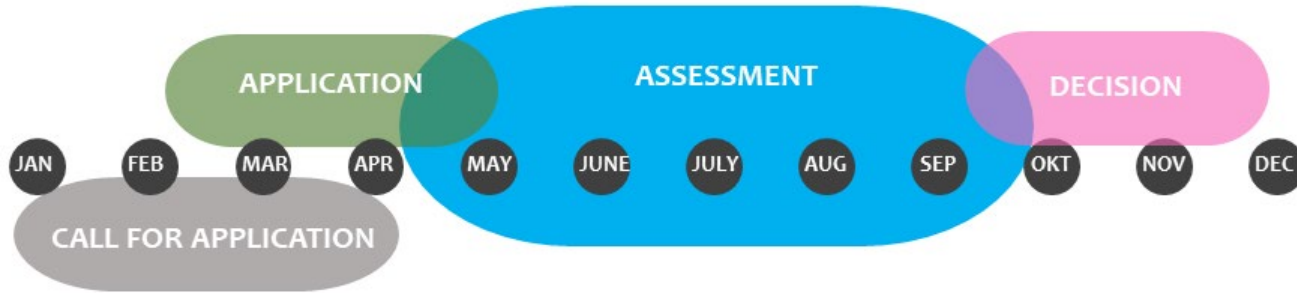
For information about critical operating issues and other important messages regarding Prisma, click the link below.

Operating information



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VR funding and reviewing process



- 6000 received applications per year
- 900 reviewers (40% international)
- 90 review panels
- Average success rate 17% (2020)

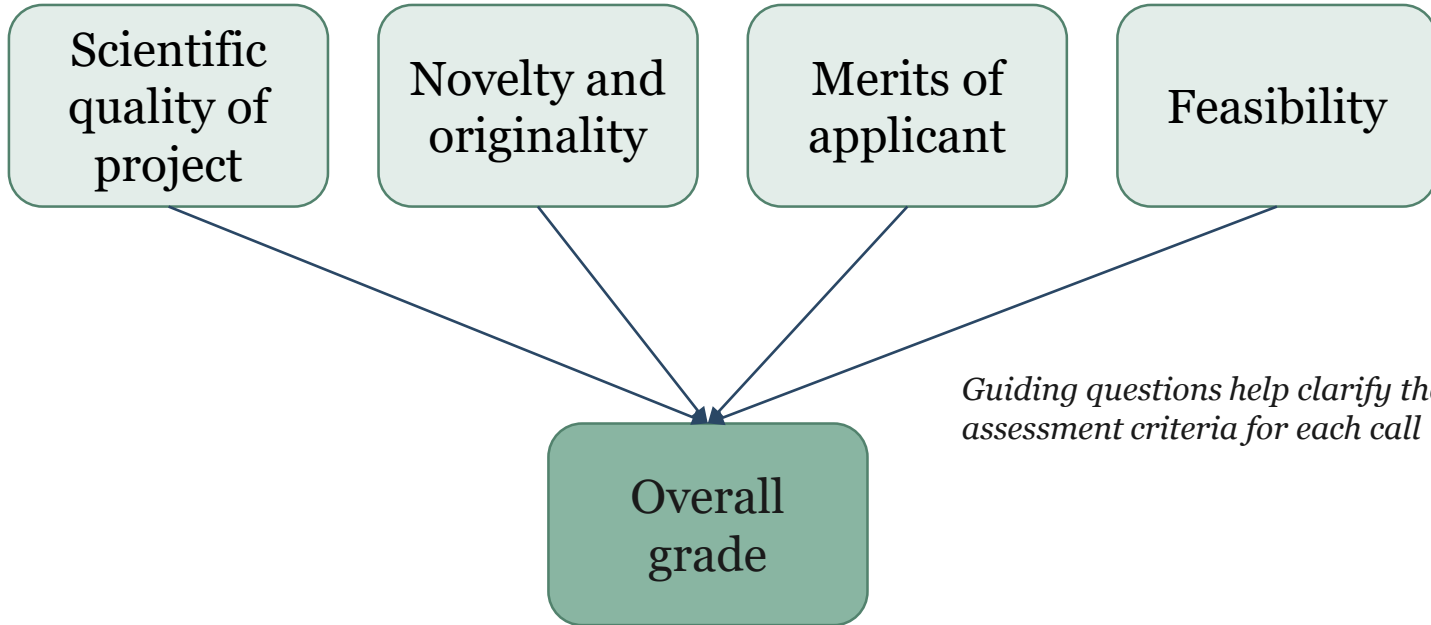


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VR's four base criteria for review



Guiding questions help clarify the assessment criteria for each call



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Scientific quality of project (1-7)

- Are the **scientific questions** addressed important in the context of existing scientific knowledge and ongoing research worldwide?
- Does the proposal outline a **research approach** that is likely to deliver answers to the questions being addressed?
- When applicable, is the proposed development of **methods or techniques** of high scientific significance? Does this proposed development allow **new scientific questions** to be addressed?
- When applicable, how are issues relating to **sex and gender perspectives** justified and handled in the research plan?



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Novelty and originality (1-7)

- To what extent does the proposed project define **new, interesting scientific questions**?
- To what extent does the proposed project use **new ways and methods** to address important scientific questions?
- When applicable, does the proposed **project show a clear progression** in relation to the previous research of the applicant?



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Merits of applicant (1-7)

- How significant is the **applicant's scientific productivity, impact and other merits** in a national and international perspective, in relation to the research area?
- What is the applicant's **scientific competence** within the research area of the application?
- When applicable, does the applicant have **previous experience** in the development of experimental or theoretical methods?



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Feasibility (1-3)

- Are the available equipment, infrastructure and other **resources adequate** for the proposed project?
- Does the applicant or project group have **sufficient competence** to perform the proposed research?
- Does the research plan support the likelihood that the proposed project will be **performed successfully**?
- Is the applicant's **activity level** in the project reasonable in relation to the proposed project?



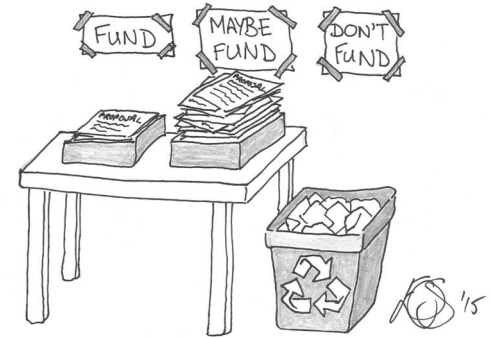
Overall grade (1-7)



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The overall grade is formed without a pre-determined numerical weighing of the basic criteria. However.....

- Scientific quality and the merits of the applicant are the two most important criteria
- Novelty and originality should be given lower weight
- “Not Feasible” applications will affect the overall rating



Review panel categories.



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The grading scale


Scientific
quality of
project

Novelty and
originality

Merits of
applicant

Feasibility

- 
- 7 = **Outstanding.** Exceptionally strong application with negligible weaknesses
 - 6 = **Excellent.** Very strong application with negligible weaknesses
 - 5 = **Very good to excellent.** Very strong application with minor weaknesses
 - 4 = **Very good.** Strong application with minor weaknesses
 - 3 = **Good.** Some strengths, but also moderate weaknesses
 - 2 = **Weak.** A few strengths, but also at least one major weakness or several minor weaknesses
 - 1 = **Poor.** Very few strengths, and numerous major weaknesses

- 
- 3 = Feasible
 - 2 = Partly feasible
 - 1 = Not feasible

One overall grade



Some general tips

Start in time and be sure to get feedback

Familiarize yourself with the application system Prisma –
put in your data before the call opens

Read previous applications within your panel

- Order accepted applications (decisions published on www.vr.se) from registrator@vr.se
- Ask for rejected ones at the same time!



How can we at RSO help you with your VR application?

Application workshop:

- 30 min zoom meeting
- Thursdays only
- Oral and/or written feedback on research ideas/application drafts

Suitable for:

- Very early drafts, rejections
- Want to test an idea
- First time applicants

Feedback via email:

- No time limit + iterative support
- No specific day
- Feedback directly in your application text

Suitable for:

- More developed drafts
- Feedback-friendly
- Less talk – more action



Contact

For all questions: rso@umu.se

[Register for the application workshop](#)

Send you application for Review/feedback to rso@umu.se



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