Call: Strategic research grants 2024, Review Panel B2

Purpose of the call
The call is open for all research areas within the Faculty of Medicine with the aim to strengthen the competitiveness of researchers to attract external grants. The funding may be used for salaries (doctoral students, postdocs or other employees), infrastructures or to cover project running costs. This is the eight time that the Faculty of Medicine has announced the call.

Researchers who already have obtained any kind of local funding or co-funding of 500 000 SEK or more, are not eligible to apply. Researchers who have received funding of 4 MSEK or more (*1 MSEK or more for scientifically young researchers*) are not eligible to apply.

Guidelines to assess the applications

The applications are assessed based on criteria and grading scales for project grants used by Forte's and Formas' scientific councils.

- The scientific quality of the project (1-7)
- The research competence of the project leader and research group (1-7)
- Societal relevance[1] and/or utilisation (1-7)
- Feasibility (1-3)
- An overall assessment, reflecting the scientific quality and societal benefit of the application (1-7)

The scientific quality of the project (1-7)
Strengths and weaknesses of the project's question and methodology, including potential for future scientific activities.

- Will the project, if successful, significantly advance our understanding of the field?
- Are the research questions well formulated and well substantiated?
- Is the need for the research well justified and grounded in existing research?
- Is the research proposal relevant for medical and health research and the definition of the problems and proposed solutions clear, convincing, and compelling?
- Does the study design, research questions and/or hypotheses and theoretical framework meet the standards of highest scientific quality?
- Are the research questions and/or hypotheses clearly defined and based on the appropriate literature and/or preliminary data?
- Does the program present preliminary data to support the research questions?
- Are there relevant scientific collaborations?
- Are methods, including data analysis and statistics, appropriate for the project and well described?
- Have potential problems with the research methods been taken into account as well as alternative strategies identified and presented?

[1] Relevance in relation to societal needs for an increased knowledge in: public and individual health; efforts to promote good health and prevent ill health; rehabilitation and nursing and healthcare processes and systems.

- Are the ethical considerations for the proposed project described and addressed properly?
- If a gender, diversity or sustainable perspective is described as relevant to the research project, has the applicant considered it in the description of the proposed work, for instance as part of preliminary data, the choice of samples or study population, or data analyses?
- Does the project have an interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary approach? if so, is such an approach used effectively? Are the disciplines involved in the project well described and the way in which the project is inter- or multidisciplinary?
- Does the applicant have ongoing or planned national or international collaborations that strengthen the quality of the project?

The research competence of the project leader and research group (1-7)
Scientific qualifications and merits in relation to the proposed project.

- Does the applicant have sufficient research experience, expertise, level of independence and scientific network for implementation of the proposed project?
- How does the applicant's academic qualifications and achievements relate to his or her career stage and active time for research?
- Does the applicant have a documented independent line of investigation?
- Does the publication record suggest a coherent line of investigation? Does the applicant report publications as senior author? Focus is on the most relevant and important publications and reports, with emphasis on quality rather than quantity.
- Does the applicant have ongoing or planned national or international collaborations that strengthen the quality of the project?
- Has the applicant experience and ability to disseminate research and research results to stakeholders/end users

Societal relevance and utilisation (1-7)

- Are the research questions, over a short-term or long-term perspective, relevant to societal needs for an increased knowledge in public and individual health; efforts to promote good health and prevent ill health; rehabilitation and nursing and healthcare processes and systems.
- Are the research questions, outcome measures and central perspectives relevant to actors affected by the research (such as users, patients, practitioners, professions, policymakers)? Is this relevance well described?
- Is there a well-described plan for how the research will be of use in the wider community and for the actors affected by the research?
- Is the planned collaboration and user participation relevant and likely to produce the expected effects? (Evaluate when relevant)
- Will actors affected by the research be involved in conducting it? Is there a well-described plan for how and in which parts of the research process collaboration will take place? Does the project budget include costs for this collaboration? (Evaluate when relevant)
- Has the applicant clearly described how the research will be communicated, both within academia as well as to the wider community and relevant stakeholders?

A seven-grade scale is used to evaluate the scientific quality of the project, research competence of the project leader and research group and societal relevance.

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

Feasibility (1-3)
Carry out an evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed project.

- Considering the project as a whole, including participating researchers, is it clear from the application that the applicant or project group have sufficient competence for completion of the project?
- Is the project leader's level of activity within the project sufficient with regards to the proposed research plan?
- Is the work plan, including the budget and timeframe, realistic and suitable for implementing the proposed project?
- Are the materials, methods (including statistics and/or power calculations (when relevant)), experimental models, and when appropriate, patient/study cohorts adequate and well adapted to the hypothesis or research question?
- Have potential problems or risks associated with conducting the research been described well, and is there any plan for dealing with them?

Collaboration outside the scientific community and plan for communication of research results (1-3)

1. **Not feasible**
2. **Partly feasible**
3. **Feasible**

Overall grade (1-7)
Finally, you shall weigh together the various criteria into an overall grade according to the seven-grade scale above. The overall grade is not the same as an average grade or a summary of the evaluations; instead, it shall reflect the scientific quality and societal benefit of the application as a whole. It is not a condition that the quality concept covers all aspects of the various criteria, nor that they have the same relative weight for all applications. In normal cases, however, a strongly positive evaluation of only one criterion cannot outweigh other weaknesses of an application when weighed together.

Ranking
You shall also rank each specific application against all the others you have reviewed. The ranking is an important instrument when the applications are compared with each other. You must rank all the applications you have been allocated (both those for which you are the rapporteur, and those for which you are a reviewer). Ahead of the review panel meeting, all individual rankings of all the reviewers are weighed together into a preliminary joint ranking for each application.

Triage to screen out applications (sifting)
In order to have an opportunity to discuss all applications assessed to have a reasonable chance of being awarded a grant, a sifting process will occur, excluding the applications that have the least chance of securing funding. A general rule is that around 60 % of the applications shall be discussed at the panel meeting, with some variation between calls. The sifting shall be carried out with the gender distribution in mind, to ensure the process is not applied differentially for women and men.

Applications where the ranking or the grading differs considerably, despite having a low ranking, should be identified, and discussed at the meeting.

The list of applications up for discussion shall be made available to all panel members ahead of the meeting. All panel members can always ask for an application to be brought up for discussion at the meeting, even if it has been proposed to be excluded.

If there are 25 applications or fewer, all panel members will read all applications.
If there are more than 25 applications and thus not all panel members have read all applications initially, it is important that all panel members read all applications that are to be discussed at the panel meeting.

Review panel meeting
At the review panel meeting, the applications are reported on and discussed, using the grading and ranking done by all the panel members ahead of the meeting. Each application is presented by the assigned rapporteur among the panel members. During the discussion, each panel member is free to change any grade, based on aspects raised that might have been foreseen by the individual reviewer. All grades from the different subsidiary criteria are then combined to produce a summary score for each application and a final ranking of the application in relation to the other applications. When two or more applications are assessed as equal, based on their total score, the score for scientific quality and societal relevance will be ranked as most important.

The chair leads the discussion, and as a rule, the rapporteur gives an introduction to the application in question. The chair is also responsible for including any assessments from any of the panel's reviewers in the discussion.

The review panel has equal responsibility for each application reviewed by the panel, and each one shall be evaluated based on its own merits. At the same time, the applications shall compete on equal terms. No application may therefore be given a higher or lower grade

because it belongs within a certain subject area. Nor shall the panel carry out any quota-based allocation between the different scientific disciplines represented.

Note that the meeting time is finite. It is therefore important to try to find a balance in the time allocated to each application. If any possible conflict of interest is discovered (your own or others') during the meeting, please bring this up with the chair, preferably prior to the meeting.

A member from the Strategic Board for Research (FON) and/or a member from the Faculty Board (FN) will be appointed as observers.

Prioritizing
Once all applications have been discussed, and the assessments are finalized for each application, the panel shall carry out a prioritization of the applications with focus on the overall highest scientific quality and societal relevance based on the summary score. This prioritization shall conclude with the review panel's proposal for applications to be awarded grants within the panel's framework. The panel shall also agree upon a priority list with two reserves.

The rapporteur writes a final statement
For the applications discussed at the meeting, the rapporteur for each application is responsible for writing a final statement. The rapporteur should write the statement with the aim of helping the applicant improve their application. It is vital that this final statement reflects the joint opinion of all panel members, and the written comments should correspond to the assigned grades describing the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

General advice and recommendations on final statements

- **Focus on describing both the main strengths and weaknesses of the application.** Try to emphasize relevant conceptual, structural and/or methodological issues as discussed at the review panel meeting. The statement should clearly describe how the review panel assessed the different parts of the application.
- **Ensure that the written comments correspond to the assigned grades**. It is helpful to use the definitions of the grading scale in the justifications (Outstanding, Excellent, Very good to excellent, Very good, Good, Weak, and Poor). For example, if a grade of 4 is given, the justification should contain both strengths and minor weaknesses in line with the definition of this grade.
- **Consider the guiding questions** for the different criteria when you draft the final statement.
- **Write concisely but do not be too brief**. The content rather than the length of the text is of significance. However, too brief justifications may be counterproductive, as the aim is to help the applicant understand the grounds for the assessment.
- Comment on whether divergence from the general instructions for the application has been weighed into the assessment of the application.
- Be constructive and objective.
- The final statement should preferably be written in English.

Do not

- Do not include a long summary about the applicant or the research described in the application. The focus should be the assessment of the application, not a description of the project.
- Do not formulate any individual comments (such as “I think” or “In my view”). The final statement is from the review panel collectively.
- Do not include quantifiable data, such as the exact number of publications, or bibliometric data.
- Do not include personal details (such as gender or age).
- Do not include any recommendation on whether to refuse or grant an application.

The Faculty of Medicine, Umeå University, wishes to express its sincere gratitude for the important work carried out by the review panel members.