

Information Sheet

1. Name of the project

Analysis of the evaluation summary reports of funding proposals

2. General description of study method, including the research group's experience, if any of the method

Together with the Aalto IT services, the Pre-Award team of Aalto Research Services has initiated a project to analyze evaluation reports of research funding applications automatically. This development project will train a semantic AI tool to extract and group comments from evaluation summary reports of funding proposals to find recurring patterns of evaluation statements. The Pre-award Team will then analyze such comments to write a set of best practices for Academy of Finland and EU proposals.

For the Academy of Finland, the evaluation summary reports included in this study will start from the year 2016 until now. They will include the Academy September call and programmatic calls, but not the Strategic Research Council calls. The evaluation summary reports of the EU proposals included in this study comprise H2020 (and Horizon Europe) instruments excluding ERC and MSCA individual fellowships.

The Pre-Award team has already conducted a few analyzes of evaluation summary reports at a smaller scale and manually. The IT Solution Development team of the Aalto IT services brings the necessary AI competence and answers for the technical development of the tool and data security.

3. Purpose of the study

The goal of the study is to prepare sets of best practices for proposal preparation for Academy of Finland and EU proposals based on the common pitfalls identified from the evaluation summary reports of Aalto's proposals. The outputs of the study will be available to all interested Aalto researchers. The Pre-Award team will also use the results when advising Aalto researchers in proposal preparation.

4. Funding or financier(s) of the research

This research is funded by Aalto University (as part of the normal operations of the RES Pre-award team and IT services).

5. Compensation (or lack of) paid to research participants

No compensation.

6. Voluntary nature of participation, right to discontinue participation at any time without obligation to disclose any specific reasons for discontinuing; research data collected up to the time discontinuation may still be used.

Participation in this study is voluntary to each researcher and can be discontinued at any time. The data collected upon discontinuation may still be used.

The reports are treated as anonymous, meaning that only the text fields containing the evaluation statements are analyzed and used to obtain the results. Personal data eventually present in the evaluation summary report (e.g. the applicant names in the Academy of Finland reports) are disregarded. More information on the treatment of personal data is included in the Privacy Notice.

7. Possible risks and their prevention

One may envision a possible negative impact on a researcher's career if a negative evaluation summary report is leaked. For the EU reports, this is not relevant since the applicant's name is not included in the evaluation report. For the Academy of Finland, we consider this risk as minor. A negative evaluation of a single proposal has nothing to do with the value of that researcher, and we do not see in which way it may negatively impact that researcher's career. All researchers have failed proposals in their history, and it is by failing that they improve their grant writing skills.

Mitigation measure: we will limit the number of people that can access the reports to the Pre-Award team (which also in their normal work treats evaluation summary reports confidentially) and the experts from IT that work on the project. The reports are stored in accordance with Aalto IT guidelines, and only the project's coordinating researcher can give access rights to the storage folder in which reports, including personal data, are stored.

The types of comments that we extract are general (i.e. non project-specific), and the volume of data so large that it will be impossible for anyone to recognize any of the researchers behind the results of the analysis.

8. Communication with the research staff during testing

We will contact researchers primarily by e-mail. You can contact us at any time during the study:

Contacts:

Claudia Dell'Era, Dr.Sc., Senior Grant Writer, claudia.dellera@aalto.fi, +358 50 441 1407

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9. Description of research situation (how long it will take to participate, etc.)

We will develop the tool for the Academy of Finland case in 2021. If we are successful, we will proceed with the development adjustments needed for the EU case in 2022. The analyses of the results will be

compiled in 2022. If the testing phase is successful, we intend to continue the study with further evaluation reports in the coming years.

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