

Guidelines

for Mitigating Bias in Scientific Evaluation and Decision-Making Processes



What is bias?

In different ways and to differing degrees, every individual is subject to bias, whether consciously or unconsciously. Bias reflects prejudices and stereotypes that are inherent to a person's thinking and enable rapid judgement processes. As such, research and science are not free of implicit and explicit prejudice either.

Why is it important to mitigate bias in science and the humanities?

Decisions regarding personnel and funding can also be biased. In science and the humanities, this runs counter to the merit-based selection and can be discriminatory.

In fair evaluation and decision-making processes, no person is prevented or excluded from pursuing an academic career because of non-scientific factors. Accordingly, DFG funding decisions should be taken based on scientific criteria and remain free from (any appearance of) discrimination.

Link to the film
[„Unbiased Review“](#)



“The review must not be based on non-scientific criteria (...) to the detriment of the applicant.”
(DFG form 10.20)

“Unavoidable delays in the research career of applicants (...) will be duly taken into account in their favour”
(DFG form 70.02)

How does the DFG contribute to mitigating bias?

The DFG specifies procedural rules for unbiased review and evaluation as well as for fair funding decisions and ensures compliance with these rules so that bias or discrimination can be identified and ruled out where necessary.

Concrete recommendations for action

- ▶ **Ongoing engagement** with the issue of bias can counteract such tendencies, particularly in assessments and decisions, and it can also lead to an increased awareness of one's own implicit prejudices.
- ▶ **Transparent procedures and the observance of predefined standards** help reduce bias. In particular, the defined review criteria are to be applied equally to all individuals involved.
- ▶ Review, evaluation and decision-making processes are **science-led, justified and constructive**. The assessment of support structures is taken into account in accordance with the guidelines.
- ▶ Any discrimination based on non-scientific factors is avoided by taking appropriate account of a person's **individual life situation**.
- ▶ Votes are based on the **content of the proposal documents**, the curriculum vitae, and also – in the case of on-site and panel reviews – on the presentation of the applicants and their qualifications for the project.
- ▶ Another way of mitigating bias is to allow **sufficient time** for the written review and evaluation of research proposals of all persons and institutions as well as for the preparation of review and committee meetings.

Link to the e-learning „Mitigating Bias“



Further information is available at www.dfg.de/bias/en.