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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.



"The review must not be based on nonscientific criteria (...) to the detriment of the applicant."

(DFG form 10.20)

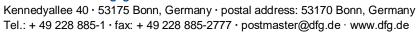
"Unavoidable delays in the research career of applicants (...) will be duly taken into account in their favour"

(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.

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For a summary of measures and further information, see the DFG website at

www.dfg.de/bias/en.

Concrete measures for mitigating bias

▶ Ongoing engagement with the issue of bias can counteract such tendencies, par-

ticularly in evaluations and decisions (in research), and it can also lead to an in-

creased 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 indi-

viduals involved.

▶ Review, evaluation and decision-making processes are science-led and construc-

tive. 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.

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