

# How to Review OTKA Proposals

## General and Technical Guidelines

### 1. Short Summary

Professional review of the proposals requires accurate knowledge of the call for proposals which can be downloaded here:

<http://www.otka.hu/en/call-for-proposals>

#### 1.1. Accessing the Review Field

Please follow the login method described in the invitation e-mail ('Request for scientific review by OTKA').

Alternatively, if you are a registered user of the OTKA EPR system, you can login here:

<https://www.otka-palyazat.hu/index.php?menuid=210&lang=EN>

You need to provide your user name and password in the login field.

Click on the "**Review/Proposals**" link in the green field on the left.

Consequently, you can view and review the proposals assigned to you. (Another way to get to the proposal is clicking on the link "Number of tasks due" on the first page.)

### 2. Preparing the Review

#### 2.1. General Information

Clicking on the title of the proposal, you see a new window where you can view the short summary and the participants of the proposal.

After clicking on the link "**Accept**," you can view the complete proposal by clicking on the link "**The Proposal**" on the right, under the grey button "**Prepare Review**."

#### 2.2. Declining the Review Request

If you decide not to evaluate the proposal, click on the grey button "**Decline**".

A new window appears where you can select from the following options in a roll down menu: conflict of interest, other obligations, lack of competence, other reason.

Please insert a few sentences for information in the field under the reason for not accepting.

By clicking the grey "**OK**" button, you send the reason and the explanation to the review panel chair.

#### 2.3. Preparing the Review

It is recommended that you prepare the review in a word processor separately and then copy-and-paste it into the online form.

Click on the grey button "**Prepare Review**". Consequently, a new window appears where you can prepare the review.

You can read useful information by clicking on the links at the top of the screen.

It is mandatory to fill in the fields marked with an asterisk.

The size of the editing fields (text boxes) on the screen does not limit the length of the text: in the drop-down menu above field #0, you can define how many lines you prefer in the text field.

The review text has to be entered in the fields with blue edges. Every text field is followed by a grey "**Save**" button – please use them after answering each review question making sure that

the text entered will be saved.

Below the written review of the proposal, you can select a summary ranking from a drop-down menu of ranking scores. It is especially important to have a detailed written justification if you select the highest or the lowest ranking from the menu in evaluating the research proposal or the personal competence. Further evaluation fora (review panels, boards) cannot make use of rankings without proper justification.

Clicking on the grey button “**Save,**” you exit the given field with the entered information saved. If you want to interrupt the evaluation and continue later, please click on “**Prepare Review**” in order to edit the review again.

By clicking on the grey button “**Check review**” you can have a look at your review in general. Clicking on the grey button “**Printer Friendly Version**” at the top of the page, a new window appears where you can print the review for yourself by selecting “**Print**” from the “**File**” menu. You do not have to mail us the review.

When the review is complete, you can send it by clicking on the grey button “**Check review**” and then “**Finalize and send review to OTKA**” at the top of the page. A warning appears to make sure that you really intend to send your review to the database – click “**OK.**”

Subsequently, a purple sign “**Review submitted (year.month.day)**” indicates at the end of the line of the given proposal in the list of proposals assigned to you that you have completed and sent the review. Clicking on this, you can also print the review.

### **3. Guidelines on Principles**

Information for the Participants in the Evaluation of the Proposals  
(Reviewers, Committee/Panel Members, Board Members)

Objective evaluation of the proposal is an important scientific responsibility.

Please study the evaluation guidelines carefully. A broad and objective evaluation is needed. If some elements of your evaluation do not fit in a particular field of the structured form, please record your remarks in the field “Overall Evaluation.” The committees/review panels consider all written evaluations. Please express your assessment in terms of the ranking scale as well. This scale is useful for administrative processing. The committees/review panels rely on your evaluation as well as the remarks of the committee discussion during the formulation of their assessment; all information is taken into account in establishing the ranking list. Your detailed evaluation informs the committee members about your assessment of the proposal.

#### *3.1. Confidentiality*

OTKA handles the data of the assigned reviewers in a strictly confidential manner; the incoming evaluations are tagged and identified with a code. The applicants receive the evaluations of the reviewers as well as those of the committees. Reviewers are also obliged to observe confidentiality. Please submit your evaluation electronically; the system guarantees confidentiality. The review must not contain information about the reviewer. You must not inform anyone about your evaluations and about the proposals you evaluate.

#### *3.2. Conflict of Interest*

If you are positive about your conflict of interest, you cannot evaluate the proposal. If you are not sure (for example, co-authored an article with the applicant six years ago), but you think you can provide an objective evaluation, please review the proposal, briefly indicating in the first field (i.e. in field #0, as confidential information) the circumstances which OTKA may

have to consider while using your review. This information is not accessible to the committee and it does not put your anonymity at risk.

There is a conflict of interest if

1. The applicant and the reviewer have had a close working relationship within the last five years.
2. The applicant and the reviewer have had close family relationship.
3. The applicant and the reviewer had a doctoral student–advisor relationship (any time).
4. The applicant and the reviewer have co-authored scientific publications in the last five years.
5. The objective evaluation of the proposal cannot be expected from the reviewer for any other reason.

The proposal contains confidential professional information, it is an intellectual property of the applicant(s).

It is forbidden to use the data in the proposal except for evaluation purposes, to copy the proposal or a part of it, or to store it in any format. After the evaluation, all materials and copies related to the proposal or received during the evaluation have to be destroyed.

### *3.3. Electronic Format*

Your review is requested in an electronic format, by filling out the review form in the OTKA EPR system.

### *3.4. General Evaluation Criteria*

In your review, elaborate on the criteria that are important from the point of view of the given proposal and that can be examined on the basis of the proposal – or that are lacking, although they should be included.

If you do not feel qualified to assess one of the criteria, please indicate it in your review.

The review has to elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. If you think that the proposal has shortcomings in a given aspect, you can explain how it can be improved in case of a future re-submission.

### *3.5. Ethical Criteria*

Indicate if you think that the research needs (further) permissions because the proposed scientific work concerns personality rights, health, legal obligations regarding animals, environmental issues, or it presents any other danger or risk.

Please examine if the requested budget conforms to the conditions in the call for proposals.

Does the budget contain items that are exaggerated in view of the estimated costs of the work plan? Are the requested budget and all its items justified for carrying out the research?

### *3.6. Assessment of Personal Conditions*

While considering the experience and accomplishments of the applicant and the co-applicants, all criteria have to be addressed carefully, including the amount of time spent on a scientific career track. In addition to the experience of the principal investigator, the accomplishments of the proposal's participant senior researchers have to be considered as well. In case of a proposal aiming at scientific training (school), it is important to consider the achievements of the applicant in the scientific (PhD) training of doctoral students.

The FTE (full-time equivalent) values of the applicants are an important factor. Please consider if the research can be carried out with the proposed full-time equivalents in the given timeframe.

Please also consider the achievements of any previous research and OTKA projects of the applicant.

#### 4. Review Form

**Filling in the fields marked with \* are required. It is not possible to send your review without filling in these fields.**

Proposal type and identifier  
 Principal investigator  
 Title  
 Duration  
 Support (for the duration)  
 Research effort (FTE):

0. *Confidential remarks to the committee chair (not accessible to the committee)*

Ethical remarks regarding the proposal or the conflict of interest between the applicants and the reviewer can be recorded here.

*It is an optional field.*

1. \* *Evaluation of the research project*

Please consider how the successful completion of the program contributes to the development of the given discipline or technical field.

Can the program be carried out in the given timeframe?

Ranking scale

Score	
0.0	-----
1.0	Fail or missing information. Reject. (1)
2.0	The proposal is poorly presented. Reject. (2)
3.0	Internationally way below average. Result possibly cannot be published at international level. Reject. (3)
4.0	Internationally below average. Result can be published in low-prestige international journals only, with no measurable influence in the field. Reject. (4)
5.0	The proposed research includes major weaknesses, will have low impact, possibly without much international influence. (5)
6.0	Internationally average, includes conceptual weaknesses. The proposed research can lead to average papers in average journals of the field. (6)
7.0	Internationally somewhat above average, includes several weaknesses. The proposed research can lead to publications in better-than-average journals (top 40%) of its field. (7)
8.0	Internationally good, includes some weaknesses. The proposed research can lead to

	publications in above-average journals (top 25%) of its field. (8)
8.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (8.5)
9.0	Internationally very good and has excellent parts. The proposal may have a substantial impact on its field and may lead to publications in way above-average (at least some in the top 10%) journals of its field. (9)
9.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (9.5)
10.0	Outstanding, innovative proposal. The proposed research can lead to breakthrough in its field. Result can be published in the top journals of the field and/or in prestigious multidisciplinary journals. (10) <i>(Please note that 10 points should be given only in exceptional cases with a detailed explanation.)</i>

The description of the categories and the scores are self-explanatory. Note that the applicant will obtain only your written opinion; the scores are only used as working material driving the panel discussion.

OTKA's aim is to support high-quality, cutting-edge research.

## 2.\* *Competence of the principal investigator*

Evaluation of the professional results of the principal investigator based on publication activity (mainly the most important 5 achievements in the last 5 years and 5 more with no restriction on the date of publication) and number of citations.

For PD applications, please note that the evaluation of the scientific achievement to date should consider the age of the applicant. The reference level to which the comparison is recommended is the level of the Marie Curie fellows of the same category. The top assessment below corresponds to the very best of these fellows.

### Ranking scale

Score	
0.0	-----
1.0	Fail or missing information. Reject. (1)
2.0	The CV is poorly presented. Reject. (2)
3.0	Internationally well below average. No international publication. (3)
4.0	Internationally below average. Very few first and/or last author publications. (4)
5.0	All publications are in low-impact journals, no international reputation. (5)
6.0	Internationally average, publishes in average journals of the field. (6)
7.0	Internationally somewhat above average. Many publications published in above-average journals (top 40%) of its field. (7)
8.0	Internationally good. Regularly publishes first and/or last author papers in journals well above the average of its field (top 25%). Significant number of citations relative to age. (8)
8.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (8.5)
9.0	Internationally very good. Regular publications in way above-average journals (at least some in the top 10%). High number of citations, significant recent first/last

	author publication activity. Some international reputation. (9)
9.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (9.5)
10.0	Outstanding publication profile including first/last author papers in top journals. Very high number of citations (relative to age), significant recent first/last author publication activity. Considerable international reputation. (10) <i>(Please note that 10 points should be given only in exceptional cases with a detailed explanation.)</i>

(Note that international reputation refers to direct scientific impact. Other achievements (e.g. prizes, editorial duties, conference organization, committee membership) can also be considered.)

3.\* *Competence of the senior participants (if applicable - does not apply to PD proposals)*

Evaluation of the professional results of the participants based on publication activity (mainly the most important 5 achievements in the last 5 years and 5 more with no restriction on the date of publication) and number of citations.

Ranking scale

Score	
0.0	-----
1.0	Fail or missing information. Reject. (1)
2.0	The CV is poorly presented. Reject. (2)
3.0	Internationally well below average. No international publication. (3)
4.0	Internationally below average. Very few first and/or last author publications. (4)
5.0	All publications are in low-impact journals, no international reputation. (5)
6.0	Internationally average, publications are in average journals of the field. (6)
7.0	Internationally somewhat above average. Many publications published in above-average journals (top 40%) of its field. (7)
8.0	Internationally good. Regularly published first and/or last author papers in journals well above the average of its field (top 25%). Significant number of citations relative to age. (8)
8.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (8.5)
9.0	Internationally very good. Regular publications in way above-average journals (at least some in the top 10%). High number of citations, significant recent first/last author publication activity. Some international reputation. (9)
9.5	Textual definition is the same as above. (9.5)
10.0	Outstanding publication profile including first/last author papers in top journals. Very high number of citations (relative to age), significant recent first/last author publication activity. Considerable international reputation. (10) <i>(Please note that 10 points should be given only in exceptional cases with a detailed explanation.)</i>

(Note that international reputation refers to direct scientific impact. Other achievements (e.g. prizes, editorial duties, conference organization, committee membership) can also be considered.)

4. *Parallel research*

If the applicant runs parallel research, please assess if this proposal contains significantly new research.

*It is an optional field.*

5. *Feasibility of the research*

Evaluation of the suitability, infrastructural conditions, and staff of the host institution with respect to the successful completion of the program.

Is the research project realistic?

*It is an optional field.*

6. *Dangers and ethical concerns*

Does the research present any danger?

Is it ethically acceptable?

Does the launching of the project require the consent of the Committee on Research Ethics or permission from other authorities?

*It is an optional field.*

7.\* *Feasibility of the requested budget*

The feasibility of the work plan, the full-time equivalents, the budget, and the expected results altogether.

The evaluation should describe if all the items of the requested budget are justified.

8/A.\* *Overall evaluation*

The reviewer's overall evaluation: novelty and expected scientific impact of the research, feasibility of the research with respect to work plan, research capacity, and budget.

(In case of international collaboration: Does the proposal have transnational added value? Is the collaboration necessary to achieve the aims, to complete the proposed project?)

Please include here your opinion on the broader influence of the proposed project.

Recommendation and remarks on whether the proposal should be funded.

Ranking scale

<i>Score</i>	
0.0	-----
1.0	Fail or missing information. Reject. (1)
2.0	The subject is without interest, or contains inaccurate data or insufficient arguments. Reject. (2)
3.0	With technical shortcomings and confusing information. (3)
4.0	With no measurable influence in the field. (4)
5.0	Internationally below average, with substantial shortcomings. (5)
6.0	Internationally average, with substantial shortcomings. (6)
7.0	Internationally somewhat above average, with substantial shortcomings. (7)
8.0	Internationally good, with some shortcomings. (8)

8.5	Internationally very good, with some shortcomings. (8,5)
9.0	Internationally very good, results may have a substantial impact. (9)
9.5	Internationally excellent with respect to most criteria. (9,5)
10.0	Outstanding proposal with respect to all criteria. (10) (Please note that 10 points should be given only in exceptional cases with a detailed explanation.)

This score cannot be greater than the highest score given for fields 1-2.

8/B.\* Give a list (maximum 5 items) of strengths of the proposal

8/C.\* Give a list (maximum 5 items) of weaknesses of the proposal

#### *Declaration*

I declare that I and the applicant have no conflict of interest other than what I will describe in the "Confidential remarks to the committee chair" section. (Formal conflict of interest exists if the applicant and the reviewer have had a close working relationship within the last five years – same institution, same university department/institute, co-authored scientific publications –, close family relationship, doctoral student-advisor relationship.)

I accept that the proposal contains confidential professional information, it is an intellectual property of the applicant(s). It is forbidden to use the data in the proposal except for evaluation purposes, to copy the proposal or a part of it, or to store it in any format.

I accept that I have to treat the proposal and my review confidentially and that the OTKA Office handles my data confidentially.

## **5. Technical Details**

### *Browser*

Firefox 2.0, Internet Explorer 6.0, Netscape 8.2, or a more recent browser; Adobe Acrobat to read PDF files.

### *Characters*

While preparing the review, Unicode (utf-8) character set can be used to enter text. It means that all characters of modern word processors can be used in the text field. The entire character sets of the common languages, Greek characters, several mathematical symbols can be used – as in word processors. Please make sure by saving and proofreading that you have written and submitted exactly what you intend to.

Most characters are entered through the keyboard. Special characters are accessible through the "Character table" support program or the word processor. The best solution is to prepare the review in a word processor and to copy its parts into OTKA's EPR.

### *Regular Saving*

Please check if the review can be read after saving it. All work done online should be saved frequently, or should be prepared offline and transferred subsequently to the web form. This is because servers, for security reasons, stay in contact with remote users only as long as they detect activity. The server detects activity only when one clicks on one of the command buttons or menu items. Entry of text (without save) cannot be detected by the server and does not qualify as activity. A digital clock at the top of the screen indicates the remaining



time left for saving. Whenever you save data, the clock starts again.

People often complain that the server “lost” the data they entered. Most often, this is because the user forgets to save frequently.

#### *Sending the Review*

After saving, your review is immediately stored in the OTKA EPR database, even while you work on it. By clicking on the button “Finalize and send review to OTKA,” you finalize your review and “send” it to the OTKA EPR system. The review cannot be edited further after finalization.

The review remains accessible, though: you can print it or save it for your records. Following the decision of the OTKA Committee in conclusion of the evaluation process, the review disappears from your “client space”.

#### *The Future of the Review*

After completion, the reviews are used by OTKA’s various bodies during the evaluation process. The review panels and the boards can view the reviews but they cannot see the names of the reviewers – the names are replaced by a randomly generated code to provide anonymity. Along with the text of the committee evaluation, the applicants receive the anonymous review or its substantial parts used by the committees. At the end of the process, reviews are archived.