

Selection Board - Terms of Reference

1. General Information about APPEAR

The Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development – APPEAR is a programme of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) with the aim to implement its strategy for support of higher education and research for development on an academic institutional level in the ADC's southern priority countries and key regions and in three priority countries of the South Caucasus and Black Sea Region.

The overall objective is to strengthen the institutional capacities in higher education, research and management in the addressed countries through Academic Partnerships with Austrian higher education institutions and master's and PhD scholarships as a contribution to effective and sustainable reduction of poverty. APPEAR is financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and implemented by the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (OeAD-GmbH) with the support by the World University Service Austria (WUS) as subcontractors. The APPEAR office is at the OeAD-GmbH.

The Selection Board (SB) awards funding from component 1 (Preparatory Funding, Academic Partnerships, Advanced Academic Partnerships) and component 2 (PhD scholarships if not embedded in existing APPEAR projects) of the APPEAR programme. Complete proposals for Academic Partnerships and Advanced Academic Partnerships are evaluated and ranked by peer reviewers who are assigned by the programme management. Commissioned by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Operational Unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation, the APPEAR office is in charge of all relevant programme procedures, provides sufficient information to applicants and communicates the programme results to the scientific community, governmental and non-governmental agencies in the field of development cooperation as well as to the broader public.

The eligibility check of the project proposals (component 1: Preparatory Funding, Academic Partnerships and Advanced Academic Partnerships) and scholarship applications (component 2: PhD studies at an Austrian higher education institution) regarding the focus of the programme as well as the formal requirements will be completed by the APPEAR office before the Selection Board meeting. The final decision on the selection of projects and applications is taken in the meeting of the Selection Board which will advise the APPEAR office to start the contracting process.

Qualification of the Selection Board

The Selection Board has a comprehensive knowledge of the APPEAR programme logic, e.g. the overall objective, the basic principles, etc. Moreover, the following additional criteria are central in the decisions of the Selection Board: overall quality, incorporated comprehensive relevance to development, synergy to other ADC priorities in the respective country(ies), gender, etc.

2. Tasks

The Selection Board knows the programme logic and awards funding from the components 1 and 2 of the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research – APPEAR. It decides about:

- the award of funds for Academic Partnerships and Advanced Academic Partnerships
- the award of Preparatory Funding for the initiation and development of new partnerships
- the award of PhD scholarships, only, if they are not embedded within existing Academic Partnerships or Advanced Academic Partnerships.

- Exceptional cases in component 2 that are:

- 1) Project-linked scholarship for applicants who are not institutionally anchored
- 2) Unplanned extension of scholarships
- 3) Age limit of applicants

Selection process - component 1

All partnership proposals (Academic Partnerships and Advanced Academic Partnerships) will be reviewed by two independent, anonymous reviewers. In case the scoring of the two reviewers differs more than fifteen points from each other a third reviewer will be appointed. The review form for Advanced Academic Partnerships is more complex and takes the final report of the already completed APPEAR partnership into consideration, as well as the new Advanced Academic Partnership proposal and it assesses the interconnectedness between them.

Reviewers are chosen on the basis of their specific knowledge of the topic areas and of the regional context covered by the applications. Additionally the local offices of the ADC will be requested to give a short statement on the proposed project regarding its alignment with national and regional development strategies. Furthermore, the alignment with the respective ADC country strategy is regarded as an added value.

Proposals will be selected by the Selection Board based on the scores/comments of the reviewers and how well they integrate and demonstrate ability to implement the following five dimensions (see APPEAR guidelines):

- Project design and substantive quality
- Project management and capacity of the consortium
- Relevance for and contribution to development
- Results and sustainability
- Cost effectiveness

The selection criteria for the Preparatory Funding are the same as for the funding of Academic Partnerships but applications for Preparatory Funding will not be reviewed by external reviewers.

Selection process - component 2

The Selection Board will only select applications not embedded in existing APPEAR partnerships. Applications for PhD scholarships will be assessed based upon the grants scoring matrix (see APPEAR Guidelines) by the APPEAR office (relevance for development and quality of established contacts, cooperation and partnership) and the Austrian supervisor (scientific quality of the applicant and the proposed thesis). A ranking list based upon the overall score will be provided for the members of the Selection Board on which the final decisions are made. In case of the same score women and younger applicants will be given priority. Care is taken that applicants with special needs are given the same opportunities.

The Selection Board is informed about project-linked master's and PhD scholarships that are awarded by the APPEAR office. Project-related scholarships are selected upon pre-defined criteria that are communicated in the guidelines for applicants.

3. Members of Selection Board

The Selection Board consists of:

a) Members with voting rights:

- 2 representatives of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) - chair of the board, cross cutting issues, experience in the priority countries and/or regions
- 2 scientists with expertise in science and research in the ADC's southern priority countries and key regions and in three priority countries of the South Caucasus and Black Sea Region as well as expertise in development research - 1 from social sciences; 1 from natural sciences
- 1 representative of a European development agency with expertise in higher education, science and research for development
- min. 1 representative of an Austrian funding institution for research

b) Member with consultative function:

- APPEAR head of programme

The experts named in point 3.a are selected by mutual consent by the ADA and the APPEAR office.

When selecting members of the Selection Board particular attention has to be paid to their impartiality.

The Selection Board is chaired by the representative of the ADA. Should he/she be unable to attend, a chair will be nominated by the representative of the ADA.

The function in the Selection Board is unpaid. Travel costs can be refunded against submission of appropriate documents (e.g. 2nd class train ticket, economy flight ticket).

4. Mode of working

The Selection Board will hold the board meetings in compliance with the intended min. 3 calls in the period 2014 until 2020. Possibly, an additional fourth call will be opened.

The exact dates of the SB meetings are determined by mutual consent between the ADA and the APPEAR office. The meetings are called by the APPEAR office in consultation with the chairperson.

The documents – prepared by the APPEAR office – necessary for assessing the submitted applications as well as the agenda will be sent to the members at least three weeks before the meeting takes place.

5. Quorum and voting

The Selection Board is quorate if the members have been duly invited to the meeting and if at least half of the members with voting rights are present. Decisions of the Selection Board are taken by simple majority. Abstentions and proxy voting are not possible. In urgent cases a circular resolution is also possible.

The Selection Board is entitled to award either a full agreement or to reject the entire proposal. Improved proposals may be resubmitted in subsequent calls.

In case of equal number of votes the chair of the Selection Board (ADA) will make the final decision.

The Selection Board takes the decisions and advises the APPEAR office to inform the applicants and to start the contracting process.

6. Minutes

Decisions of the Selection Board are minuted. The minutes are established by the APPEAR office and signed by the chairperson (ADA) and countersigned by the APPEAR head of programme. An electronic version of the minutes has to be sent to all members of the SB within three weeks after the meeting.

7. Miscellaneous

The decisions of the Selection Board written down in the minutes are the basis for the award and disbursement of the grants and they will also be used for the checking of the adequate use of the programme funds by an organ of the ADA.