Inclusive assessment

tools for written assessments

Reviewers and committee members can use this fact sheet to help implementing the suggestions given in the video ‘written assessment’. This fact sheet contains a description of the practical tools that can be used to optimise the evaluation process.

Look critically at how your ideal image influences your assessment.
This is how you can limit the effect of your bias as much as possible:
• Acknowledge the existence (and role) of your personal (implicit) ideal image.
• Identify your own ideal image of, for instance, the ‘ideal applicant’, the ‘ideal consortium’, the ‘ideal scientific career’ and/or the ‘ideal application’.
• Realise that this ideal image might influence your assessment and try to curtail any potential bias.

Replace your ideal image by an alternative or put yourself in the applicant’s position.
This will enable you to make an even better estimate of the inclusivity of your assessment.
Try to:
• replace present stereotypes by factual information.
• visualise the positive counter-stereotype, that is, the opposite of what you would expect.
• look at the situation from the perspective of the other (who does not fit the ideal image).
• see the applicant as a unique person, detached from all possible stereotypes.

Base your assessment on the criteria provided by NWO.
This ensures that there is less room for implicit criteria.
• Keep to the assessment criteria provided by NWO.
• Consider in advance the meaning and weighting of (sub)criterias.
• For all (sub)criterias, argue why an application either does or does not meet them.
• Consider whether and how the use of criteria might favour or disadvantage applicants who fit the ideal image to a greater or lesser extent and how you plan to handle this.
• Avoid a double standard that causes the bar to be raised for particular applications/applicants and a more critical examination of them.

Do not let your assessment of a research proposal be influenced by your assessment of the applicant, and vice versa.
This prevents these assessments from affecting each other.
• Assess the research proposal first and the applicant second.

Spend the same amount of time and attention on each application and apply the assessment criteria in the same way every time.
This is how you make sure you assess each application in the same way.
In case of multiple applications:
• Determine in advance how much time you can or want to spend per application.
• Take enough and the same amount of time to evaluate each application.
• Make sure you will not be distracted during the assessment.

At the end, reread your assessment once more and check whether it has been written clearly and constructively.
This is a way to check whether you have made an inclusive assessment.
• Hold yourself accountable for an inclusive assessment.
• Argue why an application does or does not meet a criterion.
• Be aware of potentially biased language in your own written assessment.
• Fill in all sections of the assessment form. Make sure you substantiate all considerations.
• Assess someone else the way you yourself would like to be assessed.

In case of multiple applications:
• Check to what extent the ranking of your assessments shows a particular pattern or ideal image.

For further explanation of the suggestions and the literature on which they are based, see www.nwo.nl/en/inclusive-assessment.