

Rules of Procedure for the Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (FFU), 2022

Introduction

Pursuant to Article 7 of the Danish International Development Cooperation Consolidated Act (no. 555 of 18.06.2012) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Denmark may grant support to development research with a view to strengthening research capacity and creating new knowledge to address development challenges. The funds for development research are provided in the form of grants to collaborative projects between institutions in Denmark in low-income developing countries or in growth and transition countries. The projects combine research with capacity building and may be applied for in competition based on calls for proposals, which specify research themes as well as selection criteria and agreed procedures.

The Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (*Det Forskningsfaglige Udvalg for Udviklingsforskning*), hereinafter “the Consultative Committee”, is appointed by the Minister for Development Cooperation to assist the MFA providing scientific advice in relation to the allocation of funds for research projects, strategic and policy issues, calls for proposals and monitoring of ongoing projects. Advising on the effective communication of research results in order to influence development policies is also important. The Innovation Fund Denmark approves the composition of the Consultative Committee, the content of calls for proposals, as well as the MFA’s final selection of projects.

The Consultative Committee furthermore follows the Consolidation Act for the Research Advisory System (*Lov om forskningsrådgivning*) and the Innovation Fund Denmark’s guidelines for research committees.¹

The MFA has established the following Rules of Procedure for the Consultative Committee.

Art. 1

The primary tasks of the Consultative Committee are to assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) by ensuring professionalism in the quality, relevance and effects of individual research grants, by ensuring scientific quality in selecting applications and in assessing ongoing and completed projects, as well as by giving advice regarding strategic considerations pertaining to the funds allocated for competitive applications. The Consultative Committee’s advisory services encompass matters relating to national budget account no. 06.38.02.19 for research activity.

¹https://innovationsfonden.dk/sites/default/files/2021-12/Retningslinjer_Forskningsfaglig%20ministeriel%20r%C3%A5dgivning.pdf

Art. 2

The Consultative Committee comprises up to nine members appointed by the Minister for Development Cooperation. Eight members are external, while the Head of the Evaluation, Learning and Quality Department (ELK) represents the MFA. The external members must have a research-related background and combined they must have strong professional competences in the thematic areas related to the grants, i.e. the natural, medical and social sciences, technological innovation and the humanities. The aim should be to have several (at least two and preferably more) international members and there should be a geographical distribution between the universities and research institutions from which the Danish members of the Committee come. The aim is also to have an equal representation of men and women on the Committee.

The MFA designates the chairperson and vice chairperson of the Consultative Committee.

Members of the Consultative Committee serve in their individual capacities for a period of up to three years at a time. The same member may be appointed for a maximum of three consecutive periods. If a member resigns prior to the end of a period of service, a new member will be appointed for the remaining part of the period.

ELK under the MFA acts as the focal point for the Consultative Committee. The Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) undertakes the management of research support and provides administrative backup to ELK and the Consultative Committee.

Art. 3

The chairperson, vice chairperson, and a representative from the MFA comprise an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee deals with the affairs of the Consultative Committee upon the request of ELK. The Executive Committee forms a quorum when all members are present.

Art. 4

The Consultative Committee meets regularly in accordance with the provisions of the MFA and in consultation with the chairperson, at least three times a year and otherwise as frequently as estimated by the MFA to be required.

The agenda and materials to be considered at a meeting must normally be in the members' possession no later than one week before the meeting. Materials are circulated by DFC. Online access to applications and reports is provided.

Meetings are chaired by the chairperson and, in his or her absence, by the vice chairperson. The Consultative Committee may take decisions on issuing recommendations when at least six members are present. In the event of a tie, the deciding vote is cast by the chairperson, or in his or her absence, the vice chairperson.

Art. 5

The minutes of Committee meetings are drawn up by DFC and ELK. Any member can demand to have his or her dissenting voice added to the minutes.

The draft minutes are circulated no later than two weeks after a meeting, and comments on the draft minutes must be submitted by the Consultative Committee members no later than one week upon receipt, after which the minutes are approved by the MFA (ELK).

Art. 6

Extraordinary sessions of the Consultative Committee can be convened by the MFA and the chairperson and must be held when at least two members so request. A written request must state the issue or issues which are to be addressed. Upon agreement with the chairperson, ELK may present a matter to the Consultative Committee in writing without a meeting.

Art. 7

The Consultative Committee is subject to the rules laid down by the Public Administration Act (*Forvaltningsloven*), including rules regarding conflict of interest, as interpreted by the Innovation Fund². These have been detailed in “Binding guidelines regarding disqualification due to conflict of interest.”³

There must be publically accessible documentation to show that the rules for disqualification due to conflicts of interest are followed. There will be continuous dialogue on this issue to ensure that the work of the Consultative Committee is of the highest quality.

The minutes of committee meetings and the DFC website must set out the decisions on matters of disqualification in connection with publication of funding commitments.

When the Consultative Committee decides that a member is disqualified in relation to a particular matter, the member concerned must leave the meeting room during the Consultative Committee’s discussion. That member cannot take part in assessing and deciding on the issue of his or her own disqualification. In the event of disqualification due to conflict of interest, the Consultative Committee forms a quorum when at least half of the remaining members take part in assessing the matter at hand.

Likewise, the Consultative Committee’s discussion of individuals’ personal and financial concerns, as well as of private firms’ or organisations’ financial circumstances, is subject to the professional secrecy provisions of the Public Administration Act and the penal code.

² <https://innovationsfonden.dk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Behandling%20af%20inhabilitet%20i%20Innovationsfonden.pdf>

³ <https://dfcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Guidelines-for-conflict-of-interest.pdf>

The duty to observe professional secrecy encompasses confidentiality in the processing, assessment and recommendation of applications, confidentiality concerning strategic issues prior to formal approval by the Innovation Fund of Denmark, and confidentiality as regards other discussions within the Consultative Committee.

Art. 8

In connection with the application rounds, the Consultative Committee will contribute by participating in meetings at the request of ELK and DFC, such as information meetings. Furthermore, members of the Consultative Committee act as first and second reviewer on each of the applications, in preparation for the prioritization meetings, suggest the text of the replies to the applicants and on possible follow-up on any conditions attached to the approvals, and can be consulted in case of further correspondence by ELK and DFC with rejected or approved applicants.

Concerning the management of the approved and completed projects the Consultative Committee contributes as follows: The members are involved in the case of changes in the course of a granted project, which may influence the achievement of the outputs and outcomes approved, including changes of project coordinator. In such cases, a Committee member must be consulted by DFC. In cases where DFC is informed about deteriorations in the conditions for completing an approved project, which may lead to closure, DFC and the Executive Committee and possibly an additional Committee member must prepare an explanation for the MFA.

The Consultative Committee will be informed by the MFA with a link to the MFA's orientation of the National Audit Office, in cases of suspected theft, fraud, corruption, loss or any other misuse of funds.

The Consultative Committee furthermore contributes to the quality assurance of the ongoing and completed projects, through reviewing the scientific progress as described in the First Annual, Mid Term and Completion Reports. The Consultative Committee members can be involved in meetings with the individual projects and field visits.

Art. 9

The Consultative Committee will be kept informed of other MFA funded activities in the field of research and, if relevant, will be requested to contribute with professional advice.

Art. 10

These Rules of Procedure can be amended by the MFA with one month's notice. They enter into force from February 2022.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 2022