

## Grading rubric for Explore 2025

The grading rubric is developed to support reviewers in applying the grading criteria consistently. The grading rubric describes what is required to meet a certain grade for each of the grading criteria. The rubric describes four grades. However, reviewers can use the entire seven-point scale in their assessments, through selecting grades that fall between the four described grades when relevant. For example, the grade Excellent (6) is defined as being between Very good (5) and Outstanding (7).

The grading rubric is also intended to provide guidance to those preparing an application to Explore, through articulating expectations in relation to different grades. The rubric is only available in English.

Novelty and originality				
Guiding question	Insufficient (1)	Acceptable (3)	Very good (5)	Outstanding (7)
What is the potential of the project to advance or challenge the state of knowledge and state of the art?	The project is unlikely to make a meaningful scientific contribution.	The project is likely to make limited scientific contribution and shows potential for incremental advancement of the state of knowledge or state of the art.	The project shows potential to make a notable scientific contribution that clearly advances or challenges the state of knowledge or state of the art.	The project shows potential to make a substantial scientific contribution that significantly advances or challenges the state of knowledge or state of the art.

Scientific approach				
Guiding question	Insufficient (1)	Acceptable (3)	Very good (5)	Outstanding (7)
To what extent are theory, method, empirical material and/or context appropriate in relation to each other and in relation to the project objectives?	Theory, method, empirical material, and/or context are poorly described and not aligned with each other or the project objectives.	Theory, method, empirical material, and/or context are described but lack justification or show weak alignment with each other and the project objectives.	Theory, method, empirical material, and/or context are described, justified, and sufficiently aligned with each other and the project objectives.	Theory, method, empirical material, and/or context are thoroughly described, well justified, and well aligned with each other and the project objectives.
To what extent are ethical aspects and considerations in research addressed in a satisfactory way?	The applicant states that no ethical aspects and considerations are relevant but overlooks one or more important ethical aspects and considerations.	Either ethical aspects and considerations are addressed but key issues are missing or weakly reflected on, <i>or</i> the explanation for why no ethical aspects and considerations apply is vague or lack justification.	Either the relevant ethical aspects and considerations are described with a plan to address them, <i>or</i> the explanation for why no ethical aspects and considerations apply is clear and justified.	Either the relevant ethical aspects and considerations are thoroughly described with a justified plan to address them, <i>or</i> the explanation for why no ethical aspects and considerations apply is comprehensive and well justified.

Work plan and competence				
Guiding question	Insufficient (1)	Acceptable (3)	Very good (5)	Outstanding (7)
To what extent is the work plan for the project, including activity levels and budget, realistic and fit for purpose in relation to the project objectives?	Project objectives are unlikely to be met within the proposed timeframe, activity levels, and budget. The work plan is poorly described or missing, and several risks are present but not identified.	Project objectives might be met within the proposed timeframe, activity levels, and budget. The work plan is mostly fit for purpose but lacks key details. Relevant risks are identified but mitigation ideas are not fit for purpose.	The work plan is fit for purpose and mostly achievable within the proposed timeframe, activity levels, and budget. Relevant risks are identified with suitable mitigation ideas.	The work plan is fit for purpose and fully achievable within the proposed timeframe, activity levels, and budget. Relevant risks are identified with suitable and well-justified mitigation strategies.
To what extent do project participants have the competences and experiences needed to carry out the project successfully?	Competences and experiences are poorly described, inadequate for the project, and/or not supported by information provided in the submitted academic profiles and CVs.	Competences and experiences are sufficiently described but lack justification, are mostly adequate with some notable gaps, and/or mostly supported by information provided in the submitted academic profiles and CVs.	Competences and experiences are clearly described and justified, generally adequate with only minor gaps, and well supported by information provided in the submitted academic profiles and CVs.	Competences and experiences are thoroughly described and justified, fully adequate to carry out the project, and fully supported by information provided in the submitted academic profiles and CVs.

Contribution to society				
Guiding question	Insufficient (1)	Acceptable (3)	Very good (5)	Outstanding (7)
What is the potential of the project to contribute to societal benefits and a sustainable development, in a short-term or long-term perspective?	The project shows no, or very limited, potential to contribute to society, or the proposal does not clearly explain the possible societal benefits and sustainable development outcomes.	The project has the potential to make a minor contribution to society and to sustainable development, with small-scale impact and/or benefits limited to a small part of society.	The project has the potential to make a notable contribution to society and to sustainable development, with medium-scale impact and benefits reaching a broad part of society.	The project has the potential to make a transformative and highly significant contribution to society and to sustainable development, with large-scale impact and benefits reaching a very large part of society.
To what extent does the project contribute to open science and science communication, during the project process and/or through disseminating methods and results?	Planned efforts for open science and science communication are missing or insufficiently described, or relevant stakeholders and target audiences are not identified.	Planned efforts for open science are described but lack in relevant detail, are not justified or are not fit for purpose. Stakeholders and target audiences are identified, with notable omissions.	Planned efforts for open science and science communication are described, justified, fit for purpose and mostly achievable. Most relevant stakeholders and target audiences are identified and justified, with only minor omissions.	Planned efforts for open science and science communication are comprehensively described, well-justified, fit for purpose, and fully achievable. All most relevant stakeholders and target audiences are identified and justified.