

GUIDELINES THAT CAN BE USED TO STRENGTHEN NRF RATING PROPOSALS

General: The following suggestions apply to all NRF rating proposals. They are not prescriptive but can be used as a general guideline that could be of use to strengthen a proposal if necessary.

Biographic information: Ensure that your biographic information is well written, concise and highlights the most important aspects of your research career and the awards and recognition you have received. Avoid unnecessary minor details, information that has no direct bearing on your research status and details that should be part of your research self-assessment. The real risk is that very relevant achievements are obscured in a list of minor accomplishments.

Publications: Take great caution and be extra careful to ensure that you do not make mistakes. Do not confuse peer reviewed journal publications with published conference proceedings. Always provide details such as page numbers and never consider a published abstract as a publication. Avoid padding the publication list. These mistakes are noticed by reviewers and will reflect negatively on the candidate.

Accomplished research: Ensure that your accomplished research overview clearly states your major long and short term research objectives. Always address this section from a question and answer based perspective. Then indicate which of these objectives have been reached in the period under review and what answers you have obtained by linking those accomplishments to specific papers listed under your research outputs. Avoid the technical detail of the original papers but concentrate on the major achievements and the possible impact of these findings. Avoid just listing different projects but rather integrate different projects in a larger programme with specific research questions. A strong focus is important. All good research is question based. This section should be written from a relatively neutral, objective perspective and clearly highlights what has been achieved.

Self-assessment: Ensure that in your self-assessment you again focus on your research but now highlight which of the different research achievements are the most likely to have gained you the local or international research standing that you think you deserve. Link your major research achievements to what you have listed as your most important research contributions. Clearly indicate any form of recognition that your research papers, conference or other contributions may have achieved. Highlight citations, publications in high impact journals, H- factors and stress the impact and recognition that your research has achieved. Be scientifically honest and at all cost do not inflate the importance of your research if it cannot be substantiated. An honest self-assessment may well include self criticism. If you are critical of yourself it will demonstrate good scientific judgement and will take the sting out of anything a reviewer may wish to contribute.

Future research: Ensure that your future research is focused on long term research objectives and is not just a list of things "to do". This is not a section to deal with the details of a project proposal, it is intended to illustrate vision. If you have no clearly defined research vision you may not be considered as an established researcher or research leader.

Reviewers: Ensure that all UP reviewers and close co-workers have been removed from your list of reviewers. Ensure a good balance between local and international reviewers. If you aim for international research standing, include a range of reputable international reviewers. Ensure that the reviewer is a peer. Researchers that very frequently cite your research may be very appropriate reviewers. Provide detailed contact details, not just e-mails.

Excluding reviewers: Be careful about excluding reviewers. If you have to do so, provide non-offensive neutral reasons. Your excluded reviewers may have a close connection with researchers on your assessment panel and you do not want to create the wrong impression.

General: It is very important that you carry out your own thorough editing and spell-checks. Mistakes reflect very badly on candidates. None of the proposals have been or will be edited by UP in any detail. This is the candidate's responsibility and reflects on the candidate's commitment to do it well.

Henk Huisman

Research Coordinator: School of Biological Sciences