

## Feedback Policy Guidelines for Rating Applications (with template attached)

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All applicants who have requested feedback should receive feedback. The length and nature of the feedback may, however, differ as the needs of the applicant and information available from the reports are not the same and needs to be taken into account by the members of the Specialist Committee who provide the feedback. The **feedback** process should ensure that applicants receive adequate information on how their rating outcome was decided. The following **types** of feedback should be provided:

1. A **reviewer profile**<sup>1\*</sup> comprising of the following:
  - i. Number of reviewers approached.
  - ii. Number of reports received.
  - iii. Number of reports used.
  - iv. Number of reports from reviewers based in South Africa.
  - v. Number of reports from reviewers based outside of South Africa.
  - vi. Number of reports from reviewers nominated by the applicant.
  - vii. Number of reports from reviewers selected by Specialist Committee.

***\*Although the aim is to procure six reviewer reports, four reports of acceptable quality expressing a consistent opinion is the NRF benchmark.***

2. A narrative **justification** referring to the comments of the reviewers to **explain** the **reasons** for the rating outcome decision, as well as provide **developmental guidance** on how to improve the applicant's future research or interesting comments on their current research, crafted by the assigned feedback writer. The **convener** of the Specialist Committee is accountable for **quality control** of the **content** of the feedback. This feedback should:
  - i. Be aligned to and consistent with the rating awarded.
  - ii. Relate to the rating category descriptions and definitions but should not just cite ("copy and paste") phrases from them. It is important that this qualitative feedback section support and enhance the reviewer profile information.
  - iii. Comprise of clear sentences that focus on explaining the reasons why a specific rating was awarded.
  - iv. Use the developmental recommendations section to strengthen the narrative justification section.
3. It is **important** to keep the following in mind:
  - i. The most important feedback from the evaluation process is the **rating itself**. It represents the overall opinion of reviewers regarding the standing of the applicant as a researcher, based on the **quality** and **impact of research outputs** over the last eight years.
  - ii. **Developmental** feedback is selected because of its potential value to researchers in their future work, but the comments provided might be something applicants wish to **disregard** completely.

While the NRF may engage in discussion about aspects of the evaluation and rating process it will not enter into any discussion (apart from official appeals) on the contents of feedback supplied as it emanates from the collective views of a number of reviewers.

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<sup>1</sup> See "Selection of reviewers – Guidelines to Specialist Committees" for an outline of how reviewers are selected and "Assessment of reviewer's reports" for an outline of how the usability of reports is determined.

## Feedback Template and Guidelines for Feedback writers

Assessment panel for\*\*\*

Meeting date:

Name of applicant:

Final rating:

Reviewer profile [*automatically generated from the NRF Phoenix system*]

Narrative **justification**: to **explain** the reasons for the rating outcome decision (“Why this rating?”) (especially important if the rating went up or down). The comments must:

- i. Be aligned to and consistent with the rating awarded. If the feedback is not in line with this, it destroys the whole process and robs it of its legitimacy.
- ii. Relate to the rating category descriptions and definitions but should not just cite (“copy and paste”) phrases from them. This qualitative feedback section should support and enhance the reviewer profile information.
- iii. Comprise of clear sentences that focus on explaining the reasons why a specific rating was awarded.

**Developmental feedback**: Should provide guidance (“What can I do to improve my rating”) on how to improve the applicant’s future research or interesting comments on their current research. The developmental recommendations should be aligned to and strengthen the narrative justification section.

### Guidelines to Feedback writers:

#### For whom should feedback be written?

1. **No** feedback is provided to applicants who are placed in the **A** rating category, all other rating categories receive feedback except those that have indicated in their application form that they **do not want** any. Feedback writers should therefore wait to hear the final outcome from the Executive Evaluation Committee (EEC) for those candidates nominated for the A/P category and unfinalised cases before writing the feedback.
2. **Special** care should be taken when selecting feedback for researchers who were **unsuccessful** in obtaining a rating (**RU**) and those whose rating sub-category went **down**.

### What should be addressed in the feedback?

1. The **purpose** of the feedback is both **justification** (“why this rating”, especially if it goes up or down) and **developmental** (“what can I do to improve my rating in future”) in nature and both these issues should be addressed in the feedback.
2. **VERY IMPORTANT:** Ensure that the feedback is **in line with the final rating** allocated to the applicant (refer to the Definitions of rating categories in Appendix 1). Feedback writers should, for example, be circumspect when using “loaded” words such as “international” and “leader” that occur in the definitions and descriptions of the rating categories.

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