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Abstract

Career grants are an important instrument for selecting and stimulating the next generation of leading researchers. Earlier research has mainly focused on the relation between past performance and success. In this study we investigate how the selection process takes place. More specifically, we investigate which quality dimensions (of the proposal, of the researcher and societal relevance) dominate. We also study which phases in the process (peer review, committee review, interview) are dominant in the evaluation process. Finally, we investigate whether differences between disciplines are visible. The analysis of our data set, consisting of the reviews of 898 grant applications, shows that talent has different dimensions and therefore is not obvious. The evaluation of talent was found to be contextual, although there were only small differences between disciplines. Unlike the interviews with the applicants, the external peer reviews hardly influence the decision-making on grant allocation. The notion of talent was found to be the least evident in the social sciences and humanities.

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