

Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities VER 2026

Final Report of the Medicine Panel

The Panel of Medicine had oversight of three sub-panels: Clinical Medicine, Basic Medical Sciences and Health Sciences. The Panel of Medicine had three members whose academic disciplines mapped to the sub-panels, and it was agreed that each panel member would take primary responsibility for oversight of their cognate sub-panel, with other panel members assisting as required.

In the early stages of the evaluation, the panel was required to provide guidance and approval of the evaluation approach proposed by each sub-panel. The panel noted that sub-panels shared their approaches to promote consistency and best practice across sub-panel evaluations. The proposed evaluation approaches were well structured and aligned to the procedures outlined by the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic.

Panel members observed that each of the three sub-panels performed their tasks to a high standard and submitted timely evaluations and reports. Each of the three sub-panels performed as collegial, cohesive teams with a high level of mutual support, open debate and discussion, and ultimate agreement on key decisions.

Some of the issues that the panel was required to deal with included advising on interdisciplinary status of outputs where the sub-panel questioned whether the output met the criteria of interdisciplinarity, and whether particular outputs were submitted into

inappropriate sub-panels given the content and disciplinary nature of the work. These issues were dealt with in a timely manner.

Common themes that were debated and discussed by the panel were as follows:

1. Interdisciplinarity. There appeared to be a lack of understanding by some submitting institutions about what constitutes true interdisciplinarity. In several cases, outputs labelled as interdisciplinary did not demonstrate meaningful integration across disciplines but rather presented parallel disciplinary contributions. In future research evaluation exercises, submitting institutions should develop a better understanding of interdisciplinarity and put in place structures and mechanisms for improving cross-disciplinary collaboration.
2. Impact. It was understood by sub-panels that, given this was the first time that social impact and creative environments were to be evaluated, submitting institutions might not yet have a fully mature approach to demonstrating and articulating impact. Indeed, this proved to be a challenge in many of the submissions. Case studies needed to articulate impact beyond the academic environment, in terms of new policies, interventions, social and economic impact, and new industry and business practices. Also, some outputs were abstracts from conferences, rather than papers in peer-reviewed journals and these tended to be reviewed negatively, given that demonstration of quality and impact from an abstract is challenging. The submission of conference abstracts in place of full peer-reviewed outputs might be not appropriate for research evaluation, and it should be determined whether this is explicitly discouraged in future exercises. Articulation of social impact is a challenge in all jurisdictions, but it is essential for universities to realize that they should demonstrate return on investment of public funds.
3. Internationalisation of research. A number of outputs were submitted that were written in the Slovak language, and there was considerable debate around whether

this excluded potential wider impact beyond local applications. The Panel notes that limited international accessibility may constrain the recognition and impact of such outputs unless a clear rationale for local-language dissemination is provided. Submitting institutions should be aware that these discussions occurred at a sub-panel level. In some instances, it might be necessary for an output to be published in the local language to ensure local impact, but this needs to be clearly articulated. In general, studies involving international collaborations were well received and evaluated positively.

4. Correct selection of field. Several outputs were submitted in the wrong field given the content and disciplinary focus of the paper. Submitting institutions need to pay more attention to ensuring that outputs are submitted in the correct field for appropriate sub-panel review.

Across the three sub-panels, the overall quality of research outputs varied substantially. While some submissions demonstrated strong methodological rigour, clear international relevance, and in some cases excellent international reach at a world-leading standard, a significant proportion of outputs did not exceed a medium/moderate level, reflecting incremental contributions with limited broader impact. A smaller subset of submissions did not meet expected standards, often due to limitations in methodological robustness, reporting quality, or publication format (e.g., conference abstracts). Nonetheless, the Panel recognizes an overall improvement compared to the previous evaluation cycle, indicating a strengthening of research capacity and quality across institutions.

With respect to social impact and creative research environment, the Panel observed uneven development. Strong examples of impact demonstrate meaningful contributions to clinical practice and society; however, many submissions lacked clear evidence of impact or failed to convincingly link outcomes to underpinning research. Similarly, while creative

environments were generally adequate, they were often insufficiently supported by clearly articulated research strategies, alignment with global challenges, or effective interdisciplinary integration. The Panel acknowledges that this is the first evaluation cycle to include these components but emphasizes the need for greater strategic clarity and coherence in future submissions.

Overall, the Panel considers that the quality of research, societal and creative activities form a solid foundation for the future development of an internationally competitive research ecosystem. Further progress will depend on strengthening methodological rigour, enhancing international visibility, and developing more coherent strategies for impact and research environment.

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