

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

Final Report of the Basic Medicine Sub-panel

The criteria employed by the sub-panel to assess the outputs were as follows:

World-Leading

Internationally recognised, groundbreaking research in a specific scientific field that demonstrates clear originality that shapes the field, not just providing incremental progress. The work is highly significant; exceptional rigour is shown through strong evidence, thorough controls, transparency, and persuasive arguments.

Internationally Excellent

Displays originality and international significance, though not necessarily transformative. The research is rigorous, well-designed, and the conclusions are credible and carefully interpreted. Work demonstrates international impact and is described as a major advance rather than paradigm-setting.

Internationally Recognised

The work offers a solid, innovative contribution of international interest and adheres to appropriate disciplinary standards. Its methodology and reasoning are generally robust, but the scope is somewhat narrower and is generally more limited, or the supporting evidence less conclusive than in the top-tier categories. The research, whilst relevant, often lacks standout originality or compelling evidence compared to "internationally excellent" work.

Nationally Recognised

Competent, well-executed work that meets national disciplinary expectations. The contribution may be incremental, mainly confirmatory, descriptive, or locally bounded (e.g., narrower dataset, limited conceptual advance). The methodology is acceptable but may show constraints (smaller scale, fewer validations, less compelling evidence triangulation). Sound scholarship and credible results but limited international visibility or significance.

Below national standard

This category refers to outputs that failed to meet the criteria in the other categories. Outputs may have been authored in Slovak, and/or there is insufficient information to assess originality, significance, or rigour according to standard publication norms.

Summary of the review process

The sub-panel considered submissions from seven institutions, presented as nine different groupings. In total, 223 outputs and 18 impact case studies were assessed from these institutions. Furthermore, five interdisciplinary outputs were assessed.

Five reviewers were used to assess the primary outputs, impact case studies and interdisciplinary outputs. Each was independently reviewed by two reviewers, and a final grade was agreed upon and recorded. In very few cases (due to more than a one-grade difference in individual gradings), a third reviewer was employed to assist in assigning the final grade.

There was a wide range in the qualities of the submitted outputs, both between and within universities. The overall median of outputs was 3 (Range 1-5) and the mean $\pm$ standard deviation was 3.1 ± 1.0 , with the highest institutional median being 2 (associated with two institutions). A limited number of outputs were rated in the world-leading category, and the overall quality of outputs was variable, with many outputs being rated in the lowest category.

Those papers in the lowest category had low impact, were written in Slovak, and, in some cases, were submitted to the incorrect panel. Outputs in the world-leading and internationally excellent categories were often multinational studies with clear impact and outcomes.

The panel reviewed five outputs that were marked as interdisciplinary. In all cases, the panel agreed that these were interdisciplinary, and the median grade for these was internationally excellent (2).

Social Impact/Creative Environment

The Sub-panel recognised that this was the first assessment to require submissions on social impacts and creative environments. There was significant variability in the outcomes of both social impact and creative environments. High-quality case studies provided clear evidence of impact, including commercial benefits, outreach to the community, changes in clinical practice, and improvements in patient health. Conversely, in low-impact case studies, the impact was absent. Some case studies will mature over the next few years, and the institutions are advised to develop these further to enable submission in the next VER. In some submissions, the linkage between the publications and the cited impact was unclear. This must be addressed in time for future submissions. Furthermore, institutions are advised to examine the guidelines prior to the next VER submission to optimise the future performance of the case studies.

As with social impact, there were considerable variations among the institutions in terms of their creative environments. There was evidence of excellence across all four categories in two institutions. All institutions were rated as at least good in all four categories. In preparation for the next VER, all institutions are advised to clearly describe the research strategy, the work environment and how the research strategy relates to globally significant challenges.

Recommendations

The Sub-panel wishes to make the following recommendations:

- Prioritise fewer but more influential outputs. Several applicants would benefit from a stronger emphasis on outputs that are not only productive but also clearly original, rigorous, and internationally visible. Greater selectivity and clearer positioning of the most important contributions would strengthen the overall assessment of research quality.
- Ensure that all submitted outputs are clearly relevant to the scope and remit of the Basic Medicine panel.
- Ensure that outputs are written in English
- Refrain from submitting review articles unless they are clearly impactful and provide new insights.
- Move from potential impact to documented impact. Social impact should be described with greater precision and supported by clearer evidence. Applicants should show not only that their research has possible relevance, but also how it has contributed, or is likely to contribute, to practice, policy, innovation, patient benefit, or broader societal change.
- Provide all supporting documentation related to societal and economic impacts in English to facilitate consistent and accurate evaluation.
- Show a more explicit strategy for the creative environment. Applicants should more clearly demonstrate how their environment supports excellent research over time. This includes leadership, mentoring, collaboration, recruitment, interdisciplinarity, and concrete conditions that foster creativity, renewal, and sustainability.

Concluding comments

Importantly, the quality of the basic medicine submission has improved compared to the previous assessment exercise. This is most encouraging and illustrates both the relevance and importance of the VER.

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