

Terms of Reference for the final evaluation of a Center of Excellence funded by The Danish National Research Foundation 2001-2011

The primary funding instrument of the Danish National Research Foundation is the Centres of Excellence program which sets up and funds research centres of the highest international standing for 5-10 year periods with substantial, adjustable grants within all scientific fields, creating optimal possibilities for the centres to carry out innovative and creative research of the highest quality.

The Centre has been funded for a total of ten years, which has been divided into two periods of 5 years each. The Danish National Research Foundation does usually only fund Centres of Excellence up to a total of 10 years, expecting the host institution to embed some of the activities after this period. The final evaluation intends to support each centre in this embedment and to strengthen the possibilities for attracting new sources of funding.

The centre has previously been evaluated after the first funding period, which included a site visit with three international, external reviewers. The final evaluation incorporates written peer reviews from three international, external reviewers who have not previously participated in evaluations of the centre conducted by the Danish National Research Foundation.

You are asked to focus your evaluation on the achievements of the whole funding period of the centre, even though the first 5 years have already received positive international evaluations. We ask you to focus your evaluation on *the research quality* of the activities of the centre and the extent to which the objectives are fulfilled as specified in the research plan. Please be aware that the centre leader has been asked to focus on both strengths and weaknesses in the self evaluation report. If necessary, you can request the research plan for the first funding period from the foundation.

The assessment should address the following aspects:

Research achievements

- *Research:* Please describe the following: The level of ambition as well as the originality, novelty, quality, progress and relevance of the research carried out in the centre from its initiation. Is the centre a focused research endeavour and does it comprise a coherent research program of high scientific quality? Please comment on choice of problems, theories and methods. Has the research resulted in new theoretical and conceptual developments? Has the centre made a substantial contribution to cutting edge international research within the field? The assessment must include identification of possible strengths and weaknesses in the research activities and strategies.
- *International position:* Has the centre established itself among the internationally, leading groups in the field? Is the centre leader an outstanding scientist and internationally recognized with his or her field? Please also consider the ability of the centre to attract excellent PhD students, post docs and visiting researchers. Please elaborate on the centres international position and indicate if the centre in your view is among the top 5 %, top 10 %, top 20 % or not among the top 20 % of research groups worldwide within their field of research.
- *Education:* Is the centre an attractive unit for recruiting and training of younger researchers e.g. describe the extent and quality of the PhD training at the centre and the involvement of post docs in the research development of the centre.

Organisation and management of the centre

- *Organisation:* Has the chosen structure and management of the centre facilitated a coherent, dynamic and creative research environment? Please include comments on the ability of the centre to recruit and maintain a group of internationally competent researchers, and the ability to follow the research plan. Please comment on the centre staff as a team and on the organisation of the centre in light of the research carried out.
- *Administration of funds:* Should the Foundation have applied a different strategy for its funding in the second period to stimulate further scientific development of the centre?

Social value of the grant

- *Effect of the grant:* Has the second funding period resulted in a novel development of the research activities as compared to the first funding period? To which extent has the centre succeeded in further developing international collaboration as compared to the situation prior to the grant. Please specify.
- *Impact:* Has the centre been able to influence the line of thinking in research in neighbouring fields or in areas not immediately related to the core research activities of the centre? Please specify.

Overall assessment

- *The Centre as a Centre of Excellence:* Please provide your overall assessment of the Centre in regard to strength and weaknesses during the entire funding period.
- *The Centre of Excellence concept:* Please comment on the Centre of Excellence concept as a funding instrument in terms of the ability to stimulate and promote excellence and research quality. Please comment on the current funding model of two grant periods of five years each with a midterm evaluation after 3,5 years and a final evaluation after approximately 9 years of funding. Does such a funding scheme provide encouragement to do high risk research? Can you suggest other evaluation models within a 10 year funding scheme that encourage frontier research?