



Expert Briefing Sheet: KA220 and KA210 Applications

In this briefing sheet, additional detail is provided on the **role and responsibilities of experts** involved in assessing applications for COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS (KA220) and SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS (KA210).

Introduction

A large part of the Erasmus+ Programme follows the indirect management model, meaning that Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs), in EU Member States and associated third countries, take responsibility for the management of decentralised funds including for the promotion of calls for proposals, the selection and monitoring of projects and partnerships, and the accreditation of organisations and consortia. For some assessment activities, NAs are required to engage external experts to assist them in assessing projects, ensuring that only the highest quality projects are selected for financing and that only organisations or consortia that meet predefined quality criteria obtain accreditation. For other assessment activities, usually involving lower levels of funding, NAs have the option whether to use either internal experts (NA staff) or external experts.

On the next page, Figure 1 provides an overview of the number of experts required for the quality assessment of KA210 and KA220 applications, also confirming whether internal or external experts should be engaged.

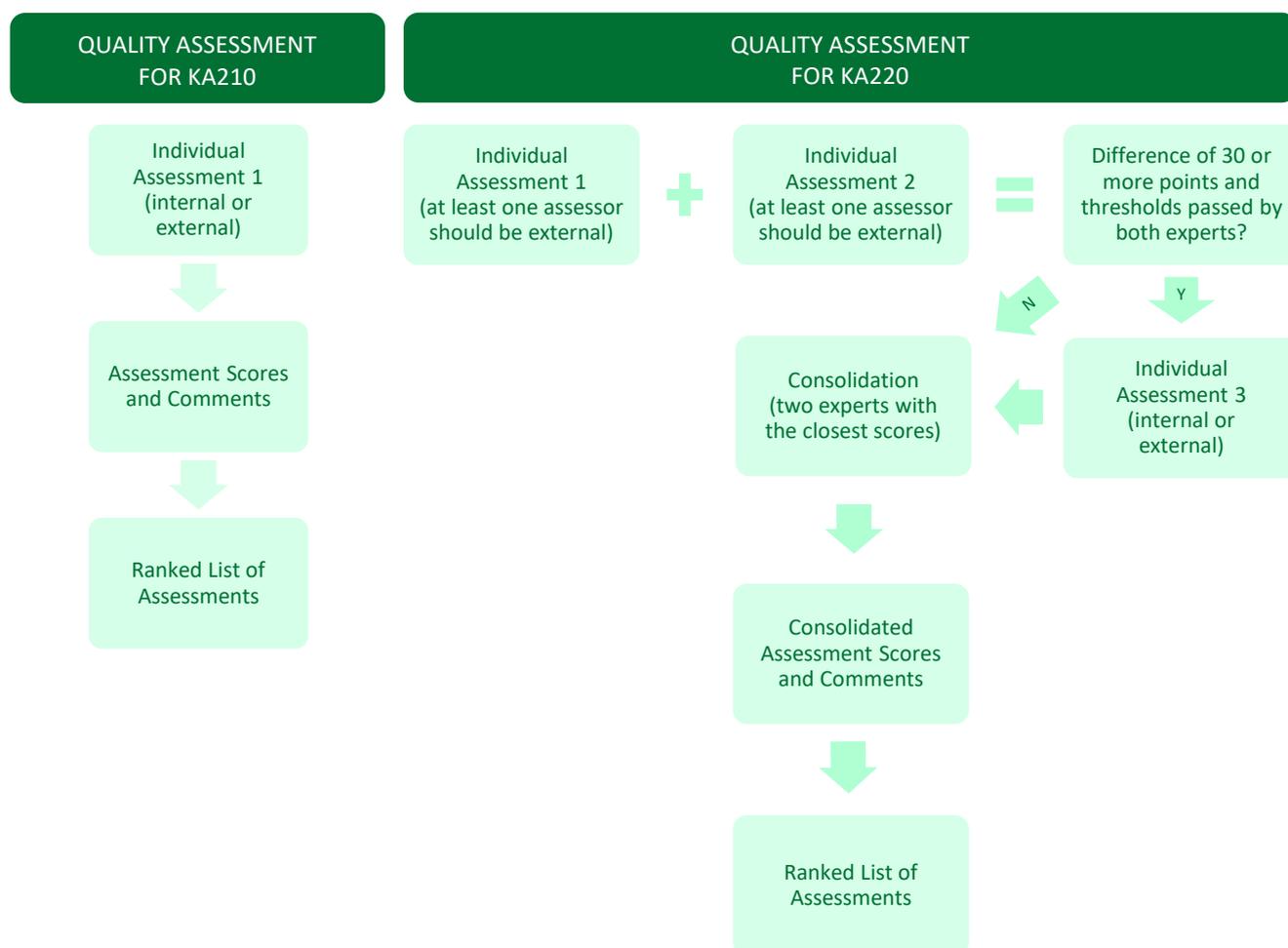
Expert Appointment, Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest

As an expert, you are appointed on the basis of existing knowledge, skills and experience in the field(s) of education, training and youth for which you have been asked to assess applications. To ensure independence, expert names are not made public. As an expert, you are required to perform assessments to the highest professional standards and to operate within deadlines set by the NA. You are bound to a code of conduct that will be detailed in your appointment letter or contract, and to specific rules on the protection and storage of data. All information related to the assessment process is strictly confidential meaning that you should not disclose any information about the applications submitted and/or the results of the assessment process to any external actors or organisations. Experts are also required to follow clear privacy and data protection rules and guidelines.

As an expert, you must not have a conflict of interest in relation to the application(s) on which you have been requested to give your opinion. According to Financial Regulation 2018/1046 (Article 61) “a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person... is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest”. To ensure this, all experts are required to sign a declaration, provided by the NA, that no such conflict of interest exists at the time of appointment, confirming that they will inform the NA of both the existence and nature of any such conflict should this subsequently become known. The same declaration binds experts to confidentiality. Experts involved in submitting an application, for the action that is being assessed, are considered to have a conflict of interest and will not be appointed. Beyond this, the NA will decide on the required course of action where a conflict of interest is declared.



Figure 1: Overview of Expert Involvement in the Quality Assessment of Applications under KA210 and KA220



Quality Assessment by Individual Experts

Before assessments begin, experts are briefed by the NA on the Erasmus+ programme and the action being assessed, as well as on assessment processes and procedures. Experts are provided with reference, background and briefing documents and are given access to the online assessment module (platform) in which the results of the quality assessment must be entered. Experts are encouraged to initially work offline (e.g. through use of a template) and to subsequently enter their data in the online assessment module.

Before starting the assessment of applications, experts must ensure:

- sound knowledge of the latest Erasmus+ Programme Guide, which provides all necessary information to potential applicants on the programme, in general, and on the actions for which they can apply for a grant;
- in-depth knowledge of the action concerned, its objectives, and the policy priorities that apply to the targeted action and field(s): for specific guidance on policy priorities, experts should also refer to the Policy Documents, Frameworks and Reports Briefing Sheet and/or the Erasmus+ Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment;
- in-depth understanding of the award criteria applicable to the applications being assessed;

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- familiarity with the content and structure of the relevant application form;
- familiarity with all reference, background and briefing documents and tools provided by the NA;
- access to the IT tools of the European Commission, configured by the NA, via a personalised EU Login account.

Experts must read the whole application carefully before completing their quality assessment (comments and scores). It is also recommended that experts read several applications in full before submitting their first quality assessment: this allows for the benchmarking of applications and quality assessments.

Standard quality assessment criteria have been established by the European Commission and are to be used in all countries, and by all experts, to ensure a coherent assessment of applications.

Experts must work individually and independently, providing scores and comments for each assessment criterion and an assessment summary, in the language specified by the NA. On completion, experts should upload and submit their assessment using the online assessment module, whilst also confirming no conflict of interest for each individual application. In some cases, experts will also be required to provide typology data in the online assessment module.

In all cases, an eligibility check is performed by NAs. If an expert identifies an eligibility issue (e.g. number of partners; type of activities), they should immediately inform their NA.

Award Criteria and Scoring

As an expert, you are required to assess applications using only the award criteria defined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Greater detail on award criteria is provided to experts as part of an expert briefing that is provided by the NA prior to the launch of an assessment round.

In all cases, each award criterion comprises several sub-elements which must be taken into account when analysing and assessing an application. These elements form an exhaustive list of points to be considered, by individual experts, prior to awarding a score for the given criterion. These sub-elements are also intended to help experts arrive at a final assessment of the criterion in question yet should not be scored separately. Additional detail is given in specific briefing sheets covering each of the core assessment criteria (relevance; quality of project design; quality of partnership; impact).

When assessing applications against predefined award criteria, experts:

- should make a judgement on the extent to which an application meets the defined criteria: this judgement must be based solely on the information provided in the application; experts should not assume information that is not explicitly stated;
- should be aware that information for a specific award criterion might appear in different parts of the application and should take into account all relevant information when producing comments and scores;
- should consider the type of project, the scale of the planned activities and the amount of funding requested: projects can vary widely in terms of size, complexity, partner experience and capacity, and process or product-orientation, and experts should ensure that judgements are made in proportion to the size and scope of each project.

Principle of Proportionality

In EU terms, the principle of proportionality regulates the exercise of powers by the European Union, limiting intervention to that which is necessary to achieve the objectives of the various European Treaties. In other words, the content and form of a particular action or project must be in line with the broader aim that is being pursued. From an assessment perspective, the idea of proportionality is also extremely important, enabling (often high-level) assessment criteria to be applied to projects of differing sizes and ambitions. In this respect, it is important to consider the appropriateness and suitability of the proposed actions in relation to broader project goals.

As an example, whilst larger-scale partnerships might be expected to impact on education and training systems and processes at one or more levels (institutional, regional, national, European), expectations for a smaller-scale partnership, in which fewer activities are targeted, would probably centre on the potential for impact on participating staff, learners and institutions. This does not mean, however, that smaller-scale partnerships, such as those involving just two or three schools, might not have more significant ambitions for change and improvement, including through the joint development and promotion of one or more outputs.

Applications are always scored out of a maximum of 100 points. Award criteria and scores can differ across different funding actions, yet the same scoring definitions always apply for all forms of qualitative assessment.

Table 1: Assessment Criteria and Maximum Scores for Qualitative Assessment in Small-Scale Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships

Assessment Criteria	Scores per Assessment Criterion	
	COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS	SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS
RELEVANCE	25	30
QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	30	30
QUALITY OF PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS	20	20
IMPACT	25	20
TOTAL	100	100

For each scoring ceiling (30, 25 or 20 points), scoring bands have been defined in which minimum and maximum scores are provided for each of the four scoring definitions [Table 2]. The alignment of these scoring bands with qualitative assessment definitions has been done with a view to achieving a coherent approach to assessment among assessors and countries.

The total number of points is calculated automatically by the online assessment module and is the sum of the scores given to each award criterion. Experts should not use half-points or decimals.

Table 2: Scoring Definitions and Scoring Bands for Use During Qualitative Assessment

	Scoring Definitions and Scoring Bands			
	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	WEAK
Scoring Ceiling	application addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question convincingly and successfully; provides all the information and evidence needed and there are no concerns or areas of weakness	application addresses the criterion well, although some small improvements could be made; gives clear information on all, or nearly all, of the evidence needed	application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are some weaknesses; gives some relevant information, but there are several areas where detail is lacking, or the information is unclear	application fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information; does not address the question asked, or gives very little relevant information
30 POINTS	26 - 30	21 - 25	15 - 20	0 - 14
25 POINTS	22 - 25	18 - 21	13 - 17	0 - 12
20 POINTS	17 - 20	14 - 16	10 - 13	0 - 9

In addition to scoring, experts are required to provide comments on each award criterion and, therein, to refer explicitly to those elements being analysed and assessed. In all cases, comments must be consistent with the score that is given.

Finally, experts must provide comments on the application as a whole. In these overall comments, experts should provide a summative analysis highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the application and indicating any areas for improvement.

Expert comments are used to provide feedback to applicants therefore experts must ensure clarity, consistency and an appropriate level of detail in their comments, using the language requested by the NA: additional detail is provided in the Assessment Comments Briefing Sheet. Erasmus+ NAs will review expert comments to ensure that minimum standards are met. Where this is not the case, experts may be asked to revise their assessment comments.

As a part of their assessment, experts should review the request for financing, ensuring consistency with the planned activities and proposed outputs. Whilst some actions allow experts to suggest a reduction to the proposed grant, where there is a lack of coherence with the targeted actions, this does not apply to SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS and COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS where a lump sum financing model is adopted and where the proposed lump sum cannot be revised or reduced.

To be considered for financing, COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS must score at least 70 points plus at least 50% under each award criterion (rounded up). SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS must score at least 60 points and at least 50% under each award criterion. Regardless of the score given under any individual award criterion, experts must always assess the application in full.

Expert Consolidation and Final Scores

In KA210, where quality assessment involves just one expert, the individual assessment will provide the final score and set of comments. In KA220, where quality assessment involves more than one expert, two individual assessments are normally consolidated to arrive at a final set of scores and comments for each application.

Where there is a difference of less than 30 points between the total scores awarded by the two experts, one expert will normally be asked to prepare a consolidated assessment, bringing together scores and comments from the two individual assessments, discussing this with the second expert and securing their agreement. In some cases, separate meetings are held to allow consolidated scores and comments to be produced. Exceptionally, where two experts are not able to consolidate their scores and comments, the NA might decide to involve a third expert.

Where there is a difference of 30 points or more between the total scores awarded by two experts, the NA will normally ask a third expert to undertake an individual assessment. An exception exists where the two original experts have both scored below the threshold in one or more criteria. In cases of third assessment, consolidated scores and comments should take into account only the two assessments that are closest, in overall score, with the comments and scores of the remaining expert not required to be considered. Consolidation follows the same process as detailed above.

Consolidated scores and comments should represent agreement among the involved experts and result in a single set of harmonised comments - with no elements of contradiction - and scores that are consistent with these comments, rather than being simply the mathematical average of the two individual assessments. Consolidation should take into account the content of both assessments, but final scores can differ as a result of bringing two assessments together. Experts should not use half-points or decimals in the consolidation phase.

A consolidation is considered as the final assessment of an application and provides the basis for ranking eligible applications that the NA will then consider for funding, subject to passing the relevant thresholds and in line with available budgets. In case of an appeal, or request for further information, by an applicant, the NA can ask the involved experts provide additional information or clarification.

Applicant Feedback

Once a decision has been taken on projects that will be funded, the NA will notify all applicants of the results. At this stage, the NA uses quality assessment comments and scores to prepare their feedback.

Problems and Doubts

There is no situation where an expert should make contact with applicants directly. Where problems arise during assessment, experts should, in all cases, contact the NA where a decision will be taken as to whether the applicant should be asked to provide additional information or clarification, or whether the application should be assessed as it was originally presented.

During assessment, where an expert observes that the same or similar text appears in two or more applications, within a single selection round, or where there are other signs of a possible double submission, experts should immediately inform the NA.