



## **Guidelines on sustainability aspects in the awarding of GRC funding**

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UZH strives to provide a sustainable environment for research and teaching. In this respect, this leaflet summarizes key considerations that are particularly relevant for the support of early career researchers. The complexity of sustainable research practice encompasses several interrelated aspects:

- Ecology
- Social responsibility
- Planning a sustainable academic career

### **Ecological sustainability**

Important criteria for assessing the quality of the project proposal are the ecological balance of the project and the measures taken by the applicants to improve this balance as meaningfully as possible within the framework of their own research and career planning.

#### **Weighing up environmental sustainability in award decisions**

In general, the environmental sustainability of the proposed activities is assessed in all GRC award decisions (Career Grants, Short Grants and Travel Grants). For Career and Short Grants, the weighting of environmental concerns is approximately 16%, and for Travel Grants approximately 18%.

In particular, the following aspects of the application are evaluated: Does the application reflect on the ecological footprint of the activity (e.g. with regard to the design of the work process, data collection, travel or the event)? Is there information on resource consumption and its justification, or comprehensible efforts to reduce it?

The quality of the information and its plausibility are decisive for the assessment. Generic or implausible information and platitudes can lead to points being deducted. For a successful application, it is important to provide relevant information. Broken down into the very different types of activities that can be applied for under the GRC's funding instruments, we present below the most important points on which we expect specific information, insofar as the aspect applies to your project: *transport and travel, digital formats and digitisation, event planning.*

#### **Transport and travel**

Many destinations, both within Europe and beyond, can often be conveniently reached by train or bus. In many cases, these modes of transport are sensible and sustainable travel options. However, if longer travel times create unacceptable challenges—such as difficulties balancing work and family life



or personal limitations that make extended journeys on public transport difficult—these circumstances can be justified in the application form, as can the use of air travel. Applicants are also encouraged to consult the [fact sheets](#) provided by the sustainability team.

Flights will only be funded in well-justified cases. For all trips less than 10 hours of travel, travel by train is mandatory. Carbon offsetting cannot be used to internally enhance an activity's sustainability record.

Particularly for destinations that can only be reached by plane within a reasonable time, the question of how to plan the trip efficiently becomes increasingly important. If transatlantic travel is essential for an activity, it must be well justified in the application. The deciding factor for a positive funding decision is whether an activity, by itself or in conjunction with other activities, offsets the increased resource use by maximizing academic benefits.

If, for example, several stays or destinations can be sensibly combined into one trip (or round trip), this increases their efficiency and improves the sustainability of a long journey. As a general rule, when travelling long distances, such as intercontinental trips, a longer and sensibly used stay can justify the longer journey. In addition, direct flights cause lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than flights with stopovers and transfers.

Longer stays can be used to combine several purposes. For example, participation in a summer school can be combined with a guest stay at a nearby institute or department, or archival research can be supplemented by establishing contacts with local research networks and exchanging ideas with researchers on site. Careful programme planning in this way increases the efficiency of the trip.

### **Digital alternatives**

There are now easily accessible and well-functioning digital alternatives available for meetings and exchanges of all kinds. In this regard, please check the possibilities of supporting your activities using online formats or holding it as a hybrid event. The inclusive aspects of hybrid formats in event planning can be particularly important for a positive funding decision.

If you need data, archival materials, or research literature for your project, please use digital versions that are accessible online whenever possible and available. If this is not the case, we expect you to consider how your activity can contribute to making the relevant material digitally accessible to other researchers in the future. Please refer to the UZH [Open Science Policy](#) for further information.

### **Event planning**

Sustainable catering solutions are mandatory. Please inform yourself about the options offered by the [ZfV service](#) at the University of Zurich or other local alternatives. Solutions include the seasonal and local selection of products and production processes, particularly the packaging and tableware used. For a more detailed list of aspects to consider when planning events, please refer to our [Budget Planning Guidelines](#) on our website.



## Aspects of social sustainability

In order to ensure an inclusive and supportive working environment, UZH takes into account relevant experiences of social exclusion and discrimination that may shape the everyday academic and non-academic lives of early career researchers. Relevant experiences may include: racialization through socially attributed stereotypes; the interaction of individual physical or mental impairments and the disability caused by social conditions; gender as a socially attributed gender characteristic and role based on biological sex; socio-economic status (education, income, wealth) of early career researchers or their social circumstances.

### Weighing social sustainability in award decisions

Reflection on the extent to which one's own research activity contributes to the reproduction of discrimination and exploitation, as well as the measures taken by applicants to avoid this reproduction, constitutes a further dimension of quality assessment in GRC award decisions. In general, the social embeddedness of the proposed activities is assessed in all GRC award decisions (Career Grants, Short Grants, and Travel Grants). For Career and Short Grants, the weighting of social concerns is approximately 16%, and for Travel Grants, approximately 18%.

In particular, the following aspects of the application will be evaluated: Does the application reflect on the social context of the activity (e.g., knowledge transfer to society; egalitarian or fair design of the work process or the use of research results and data; ethical implications of chosen research methods or subjects)? Is there any information on the broader social context of the activity? The GRC does not support project submissions that reproduce prejudices in their wording or approach or leave foreseeable unintended effects unaddressed.

The quality of the information provided and its plausibility are decisive for the assessment. Generic or implausible information and platitudes may result in points being deducted. For a successful application, it is important to provide specific information on the dimensions relevant to the application. We would like to draw your attention to the following aspects in particular: *socially sustainable cooperation and synergies, social aspects of sustainable travel, ethical standards in dealing with people and research subjects, and authorship of content and data.*

### Socially sustainable cooperation and synergies

In case your project involves field research or otherwise has references to civil society, please provide information on the impact of your research activity on the relevant social and natural contexts. In addition, explore the possibilities of sustainable local collaborations and synergies in your research context. The relevant references can be diverse and include, among others, local academic or other public institutions, NGOs, as well as members of population groups related to your own research topic.

### Social aspects of sustainable travel

The social aspects of your travel and accommodation arrangements are also crucial for meaningful travel planning. Particularly for trips involving field research and archival work, important research ethics and socio-political questions arise regarding relevant interactions with local people and institutions, as well as the acquisition and use of content and data. Careful consideration of the social



context of your travel destination can not only contribute significantly to the success of your activity, but is also an assessment criterion for the GRC's award decisions.

### **Ethical standards in dealing with persons and research subjects**

Researchers at UZH are fundamentally bound by the [ethical principles](#) applicable at UZH. Please ensure that you are familiar with the ethical issues relevant to your research and set out the conclusions you have drawn from them in your application.

### **Authorship of content and data**

In responsible research, it is important not only how data and research content are obtained, but also how they are handled and used. Applicants should follow the guidelines and recommendations of the [Open Science Policy](#) and recognize that extracting data and content from the social or natural context under study is not straightforward. Addressing these considerations in your application is encouraged. For publications, please consult the University of Zurich's [guidelines on authorship of scientific publications](#).

### **Aspects of academic sustainability**

UZH is committed to transparent career paths and decision-making processes, enabling early career researchers to plan their careers effectively. Doctoral and postdoctoral researchers should receive optimal support to develop their skills in line with their ambitions and to thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment. UZH fosters a culture of appreciation and recognition of diversity and supports early career researchers across a range of potential career paths.

### **Weighing academic sustainability in award decisions**

In general, the academic sustainability of the proposed activities is evaluated in all GRC award decisions (Career Grants, Short Grants, and Travel Grants). For Career and Short Grants, the weighting of academic sustainability is approximately 24%, and for Travel Grants, it is approximately 18%.

This applies in particular to the description in the application: Is the expected academic added value of the proposed activity for the individual's research work and career plausible? Is there a plausible and effective relationship between the activity and the individual's academic career planning? Is the content of the activity explicitly and comprehensibly embedded in the academic context (chair, research group, institute, UZH, scientific field)?

The quality of the information provided and its plausibility are decisive for the assessment of your application. Generic or implausible information and generalities may result in points being deducted. It is important to provide specific information for a successful application. Please note the following points regarding *project planning* and *academic aspects of sustainable travel*.

### **Project planning**

Early career researchers are responsible for effectively planning their own academic career path. Please note that a clear understanding of how your current research project fits within the context of



your career plan and academic discipline is also a relevant dimension for GRC award decisions. Consideration of several questions may guide you and us here:

- Why is it the right time for the specific project?
- Why is UZH the right place for the specific project?
- Is the chosen GRC Grant the appropriate funding instrument?
- Do you have an appropriate academic support network to carry out the research project?
- What positive and negative spin-offs and spillovers can be expected from the project?
- What are the next scientific and institutional career steps after completion of the proposed project?

#### **Academic aspects of sustainable travel**

Questions relating to academic projects and career planning should also be taken into account when planning your trip. Make sure that the GRC Grant you have chosen is the appropriate funding instrument for your activity. It is advantageous if you can indicate in your application how the chosen travel dates are optimal for your current research project. Please also consider the relevance of your destination and travel dates to your academic career plan.

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