

# Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the academic impact of the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NFA) 2020-2023

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2. oktober 2023

J.nr. 2023-80/63

Ledelses- og kommunikations-  
kretariatet  
LMT

## 1. Background and Purpose

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the executive order on evaluation of government research institutes.

The Danish National Research Centre for the Working Environment's (NFA) core tasks include research and associated activities such as dissemination of research results, education of researchers and counselling of and service to the authorities. According to Section 2 of the Sector Research Act, NFA must conduct research at the highest international level.

This evaluation concerns the academic impact of research, academic research dissemination, and education at NFA, while a separate evaluation will be conducted for the societal impact of NFA's consulting to and services rendered to authorities as well as policy and workplace-oriented communication.

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to learn from, and improve, NFA's institutional performance. The evaluation should infer judgment against the highest international level within occupational safety and health research as evaluation standard.

Scientific quality, relevance, and impact are the foundation for achieving the greatest possible utilization of NFA's research and research dissemination among authorities, occupational safety and health professionals, and workplaces - and thus ensuring societal impact.

The specific purposes of evaluating the academic impact therefore are:

- To assess the academic quality and relevance of NFA's research, research dissemination, and education.
- To provide specific recommendations on how NFA can strengthen the quality, relevance, and academic impact of its research, research dissemination, and education.

The evaluation covers the period 2020-2023.

## **2. Evaluation Approach**

During the evaluation period, NFA has systematized its research documentation practices. Therefore, the evaluation can benefit from drawing on a quantitative analysis based on bibliometric data, as well as a qualitative assessment of the methodological and substantive quality of the research.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the evaluation is conducted as follows:

- A quantitative analysis of the academic impact of NFA's research and research dissemination based on bibliometric data on publications, citations, research collaboration networks, and co-publications.
- A qualitative analysis of the academic quality of NFA's research, research dissemination, and education based on existing documentation and data collection at and in regards to NFA.

Explicit evaluation standards for quality, relevance, and academic impact should be established in accordance with highest international level within each research area. Consequently, the applied methodology should be described in the evaluation report.

The evaluation should be presented in a report containing a description and assessment of NFA's achievements, as well as recommendations for improvements.

The evaluation panel should be composed of international and national experts with in-depth knowledge of NFA's research areas, including 'psychosocial work environment,' 'ergonomic work environment and musculoskeletal disorders,' 'occupational safety culture and accidents,' 'chemical work environment,' and 'occupational safety and health economics.' Additionally, the panel should have expertise in bibliometric analysis and skills specific to research evaluation. The evaluators are expected to be familiar with and acknowledge the principles of various scientific traditions.

The panel should be independent of the Danish Ministry of Employment, including NFA. The board of NFA appoints the panel upon recommendation from the Innovation Fund Denmark.

## **3. Evaluation Tasks**

The evaluation should address the following questions, among others:

*Research:*

- Is the research's academic quality of a high standard and scope compared to similar research groups nationally and internationally?
- To what extent is the research focused on solving relevant and prioritized occupational health issues outlined in NFA's research programs?
- To what extent are themes in NFA's research programs and project portfolio within NFA's research areas - both applied and funded - aligned with priorities in strategic frameworks such as, national agreements and strategies,

- To what extent are the research-related networks and connections with strong research communities at universities and other research institutions in Denmark and abroad relevant and sufficiently developed?

*Research Dissemination:*

- Do researchers participate adequately in the most relevant conferences and other forums for international knowledge exchange and professional debate?
- Do researchers participate adequately in international research collaboration on specific projects?

*Education:*

- Does NFA contribute adequately to the education of undergraduates, post-graduates and Ph.D. students in the field of occupational safety and health, thus also contributing to educate future occupational safety and health researchers?
- Does NFA contribute adequately to teaching at universities, in the joint Nordic education of researchers, at other seminars, etc.?

#### **4. Background Material**

NFA will provide the necessary background material such as:

- NFA's by-laws
- Evaluation reports on scientific and societal impact for the period 2014-19 and the board's follow-up statements (2021 and 2022)
- National occupational safety and health agreements and strategies for the evaluation period
- NFA's Institutional Strategy 2020, Institutional Strategy 2021-2024, communication strategy, and research-to-practice strategy
- NFA's research programs 2020-2023
- NFA's performance management contracts 2020-2023
- NFA's action plans for research areas 2022-2023
- Bibliometric data on NFA's publications, citations, networks, etc., during the strategy period
- Data on NFA's portfolio of funding applications and funding allocations
- NFA's annual reports and annual statements for the evaluation period

#### **5. Procedure**

An independent academic consultant will assist the evaluation panel during the visit to NFA and in preparing the evaluation report. NFA will provide practical assistance to the evaluators, such as facilitating contact with relevant stakeholders, arranging meetings, and providing relevant documentation.

#### **6. Completion**

The evaluation should be presented in the form of a report that includes a summary of conclusions and recommendations, by no later than October 1 2024. The evaluation should also include an overall conclusion of the evaluations of societal impact and academic impact.

The detailed timetable for the process will be agreed upon with the evaluators once they are appointed.

## **7. Funding**

The expenses for the evaluation will be covered by the Danish Ministry of Employment.