

National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes



Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

Evaluation of Research Quality



Valutazione Qualità della Ricerca

Evaluation of Research Quality 2011-2014 (VQR 2011-2014)

Criteria for the Evaluation of Research Outputs

**Group of Experts for Evaluation
for Area 14 –Political and Social Sciences
(GEV14)**

November 2015



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1. Introduction

This document describes the organization of the Group of Experts for Evaluation for Area 14 (from now on, GEV14) and the criteria the Group will use in evaluating research outputs. The document is divided in 6 parts. Section 2 lists the *Scientific Sector of Activity*, the *Academic Recruitment Field* and the ERC Sectors which are relevant for the GEV14. Section 3 summarizes the internal procedures of the GEV. Section 4 describes the evaluation criteria for the research outputs. Section 5 describes the peer review process and the guidelines for the selection of external reviewers. Section 6 describes the ethical code that external reviewers and the GEV14 members have to follow and specify how potential conflicts of interest between the GEV members and authors of research outputs will be addressed.

2. Delimitation of the GEV area

The GEV14 will take care of the evaluation of the outputs submitted by researchers belonging to the *Scientific Sector of Activity (SSA)*, *Academic Recruitment Field (ARF)* and ERC Sectors (ERC) listed in Tables 1-3.

	Area 14- Political and Social Sciences Scientific Sector of Activity (SSA)
SPS/01	POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
SPS/02	HYSTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT
SPS/03	HYSTORY OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
SPS/04	POLITICAL SCIENCE
SPS/05	AMERICAN HYSTORY AND INSTITUTIONS
SPS/06	HYSTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SPS/07	GENERAL SOCIOLOGY
SPS/08	SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION
SPS/09	ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF WORK AND ORGANIZATIONS
SPS/10	URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY



SPS/11	POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
SPS/12	SOCIOLOGY OF LAW, DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE
SPS/13	AFRICAN HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS
SPS/14	ASIAN HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS

Table 1. The relevant *Scientific Sector of Activity (SSA)* for Area 14

	Area 14- Political and Social Sciences Academic Recruitment Field (ARF)
14/A1	POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
14/A2	POLITICAL SCIENCE
14/B1	HYSTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT AND INSTITUTIONS
14/B2	HYSTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND OF NON- EUROPEAN SOCIETIES AND INSTITUTIONS
14/C1	GENERAL SOCIOLOGY
14/C2	SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION
14/C3	POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY OF LAW
14/D1	SOCIOLOGY OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY OF WORK, URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Table 2. The relevant *Academic Recruitment Field (ARF)* for Area 14

	Area 14 Political and Social Sciences ERC Sectors (ERC)
SH2_1	POLITICAL SYSTEMS, GOVERNANCE
SH2_2	DEMOCRATIZATION, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
SH2_3	CONFLICT RESOLUTION, WAR
SH2_4	LEGAL STUDIES, CONSTITUTIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, COMPARATIVE LAW
SH2_5	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE
SH2_6	SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCES, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES
SH2_7	ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIETAL IMPACT AND POLICY
SH2_9	URBAN, REGIONAL AND RURAL STUDIES



SH3_1	SOCIAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL MOBILITY
SH3_2	INEQUALITIES, DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE, ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
SH3_3	SOCIAL INTEGRATION, EXCLUSION, PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
SH3_4	ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS
SH3_5	SOCIAL INFLUENCE; POWER AND GROUP BEHAVIOUR; CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
SH3_6	DIVERSITY AND IDENTITIES, GENDER, INTERETHNIC RELATIONS
SH3_7	SOCIAL POLICIES, WELFARE
SH3_8	POPULATION DYNAMICS; HOUSEHOLDS, FAMILY AND FERTILITY
SH3_9	HEALTH, AGING AND SOCIETY
SH3_10	SOCIAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING, CURRICULUM STUDIES, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES
SH3_11	COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION, NETWORKS, MEDIA
SH3_12	DIGITAL SOCIAL RESEARCH
SH3_13	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES
SH4_7	REASONING, DECISION-MAKING; INTELLIGENCE
SH4_13	PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, EPISTEMOLOGY, LOGIC
SH5_8	CULTURAL STUDIES, CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND MEMORIES, CULTURAL HERITAGE
SH5_9	SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, RELIGIOUS STUDIES, SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION
SH5_11	ETHICS; SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
SH6_1	HISTORIOGRAPHY, THEORY AND METHODS IN HISTORY, INCLUDING THE ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL DATA
SH6_6	MEDIOEVAL HISTORY
SH6_7	EARLY MODERN HISTORY
SH6_8	MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY HISTORY
SH6_9	COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL HISTORY
SH6_10	GLOBAL HISTORY, TRASNATIONAL HISTORY, COMPARATIVE HISTORY AND ENTANGLED HISTORIES
SH6_11	SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY
SH6_12	GENDER HISTORY; CULTURAL HISTORY; HISTORY OF

	COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES AND MEMORIES
SH6_13	HISTORY OF IDEAS, INTELLECTUAL HISTORY, HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT
SH14_14	HISTORY OF SCIENCE, MEDICINE AND TECHNOLOGIES

Table 3. The relevant *ERC sectors (ERC)* for Area 14

3. GEV Organization

GEV 14 is organized as follows:

Coordinator: Anna Elisabetta Galeotti

3.1 Sub-GEV Composition

SUB-GEV and SSA	Coordinator	Members
Political Sciences SPS/01 SPS/02 SPS/03 SPS/04 SPS/05 SPS/06 SPS/13 SPS/14	Francesco Tuccari	Attinà Fulvio Meriggi Marco Nuti Leopoldo Piattoni Simona
Social Sciences SPS/07 SPS/08 SPS/09 SPS/10 SPS/11 SPS/12	Lorenzo Bordogna	Andrini Simona Baldassarri Delia Stefania Colombo Fausto Wagner Peter

Tabella 4. Sub-GEVs, relevant scientific sector of activity (SSA), coordinators and members



3.2 Assignment of research outputs to the GEV and within the GEV

The assignment of research outputs depends upon the SSA of the author. The GEV can choose, on the basis of the information provided in the research output descriptive form, to assign the product to another GEV, if its content is more appropriate; in this case, the criteria of the new GEV will orient the product evaluation.

GEV 14 will distribute research outputs for evaluation according to the SSA specified by the author in the research output descriptive form. Such SSA may differ from the author's own SSA in case the author judges that another SSA is more appropriate for the evaluation of the product. GEV14 will divide research outputs by type of publication and by research area and will assign them to the appropriate Sub-GEV. The Sub- GEV Coordinator will assign them to two competent Sub-GEV members.

If a research output is assigned to more than one GEV (for instance since co-authors indicate different SSA belonging to different GEVs), the product will be evaluated according to the VQR Guidelines for the Groups of Evaluation Experts (point 2 Section 3). If necessary, the GEV Coordinators involved will constitute specific Inter-Area Consensus Groups.

3.3 Operating rules of the GEV

GEV 14 procedures are here enlisted:

Any GEV14 meeting is called with an at least 15 days notice. The meeting is called by the Coordinator, who also sets the agenda.

Decisions within the GEV14 are made by simple majority rule among members who attend a meeting. In order to vote, actual presence is not required if attendance is assured via web or phone connection.

The Assistant assigned by ANVUR to the GEV14, Enrico Biale, attends the GEV meetings, with secretarial functions and no voting rights. At the end of each meeting, minutes and a synthetic report, both in Italian and English, will be drafted, circulated among GEV14 members, approved by the Coordinator and then sent to ANVUR to be filed.

4. The evaluation of research outputs

The products that can be submitted to the evaluation process of the GEV14 are:



1- Scientific monograph and related products:

- a. Research monograph;
- b. Collection of essays of the author (excluding essays published before 2011);
- c. Research bibliography;
- d. Critical editions;
- e. Publication of unedited sources with introduction and comments.

2- Journal contributions, limited to:

- a) Scientific article;
- b) *Review essay*.

3- Book contributions, limited to:

- a) Chapter or essay;
- b) Preface/Postface essays;
- c) Editing of volumes with an essay.

4. Other scientific products (only if accompanied by documents allowing the identification of the publication date):

- a) Data bases and software.

In order to clarify the products under 1b), 1c), 1d) e 4a) properly, in the light of the criteria established by Ministerial Decree 458 June 27 2015 and VQR Call September 3 2015, namely originality, methodological rigor, and attested or potential impact, only the following products will be admitted to the evaluation:

- Collection of essays of the author if at least 60% of the essays are published after 2011;
- Research bibliography with an introductory essay;
- Critical editions with, or without, their translations;
- Data bases, interpreted as systematic, public and accessible, collections of original data regarding political and social phenomena certified by archives' institutes (like GESIS, ICPSR, NSD, etc.), that grants their quality and allows the identification of the authors.

Anything not included in this list cannot be considered a product admissible for the evaluation.

GEV14 evaluation procedure will follow the *informed peer review method*, according to which reviewers receive all the information provided in the research output descriptive form, besides the pdf of the research output to examine. Information will include, among other things, bibliometric indexes, if available, classification of the journals, for journal article, and peer review evaluation for monograph or essays in an edited volume. These pieces of information are to be considered in a context of *informed peer review*, but they do not prejudice the evaluation of which the reviewers is fully responsible. The reviewers are invited to use the free space to justify



her assessment and to explain how she takes into account of this information.

5. Peer review evaluation

Each research output to be evaluated by *peer review* will be sent to two external reviewers, autonomously chosen by two GEV members to whom the research output has been assigned, or to the GEV members according to the same standards followed for external reviewers, provided that the necessary expertise is available and that no conflict of interest is present.

Once received the reviewers' evaluations, GEV14 will assess them, addressing controversial cases through consensus group (point 5.2). In any case GEV14 remains ultimately responsible for the final evaluation.

5.1 The selection of external peer reviewers

The selection of external reviewers, among Italian and foreign scholars, follows the principle of honest institutional cooperation and is founded on the criteria of the ethical code (point 6).

The evaluation process depends upon the anonymity of the reviewers, both at the stage of the preparation of the reviewers's list and at the operational stage of the evaluation. The single results of the product evaluation and the identity of the reviewers for each evaluation will not be made public. The general list of the reviewers' names will be published by ANVUR within 30 days after the publication of the VQR Final Report.

Reviewers, both Italian and foreigners, will be selected among the most authoritative and scientifically qualified scholars and specialists in the disciplines relevant to the research outputs to be examined. They are expected to be active in research during the period covered by the VQR.

Starting from the MIUR reviewer archive REPRISSE, GEV14 will prepare an updated list of external reviewers such to adequately satisfy the standards set by the GEV in terms of scientific quality and experience with evaluation. The list will be supplemented with new reviewers's names selected by the GEV. In particular, through the Sub-GEV Coordinators, the Coordinator will invite GEV14 members to suggest a significant number of experts who satisfy the required standards and are available for the evaluation. The GEV14 Coordinator will collect suggestions together with information about the reviewers' qualifications, as summarized in a shared proposal form, and will update the original list by integrating and/or amending it.



It will be possible to extend the reviewer list throughout the evaluation procedure, on the basis of the needs that may emerge after the products are transmitted by Institutions.

5.2 Peer evaluation

The evaluation by external or internal reviewers is based on an evaluation form and guidelines for reviewers to be prepared by GEV14. The evaluation form allows the reviewer to grade each research output according to the three evaluation criteria established by the MD and the VQR Call, namely originality, methodological rigor, and attested or potential impact. The form will also include an empty space for a brief, but mandatory comment summarizing the motivation for the Grades.

GEV14 will translate the indications contained in the evaluation form into one of the five classes established by the VQR Call.

In case of non-converging evaluations by the reviewers, or other controversies of the reviewers, the Sub-GEV can request the opinion of a third expert or create a Consensus Group with the task of proposing to the GEV the final score for the research outputs under examination, using the consensus report methodology.

In case of conflict in the evaluation among the members of the Consensus Group, this group will be integrated with the sub-GEV Coordinator or the GEV14 Coordinator if the sub-GEV Coordinator was in charge with the research output.

In any case GEV14 remains ultimately responsible for the final evaluation.

6. Ethical Code for reviewers and GEV14 members

GEV14 members and all the reviewers involved in the VQR 2011-2014 ought to follow general principles of impartiality, loyalty to the scientific community and confidentiality.

These principles must inform the judgements of any forms of evaluation, particularly a scientific one. Circumstances of VQR 2011-2014 make these principles particularly compelling, hence it is in order underline them. The context of VQR is characterised by a *single-blind* evaluation process, namely a process where the author of the research output under review is not anonymous. In a *double-blind* evaluation, impartiality and confidentiality are embedded in the circumstances of the process. In the VQR, where the author's anonymity cannot be granted, the reviewer is responsible to be blind so as to ensure an impartial evaluation.



Impartiality is requested primarily regarding the *author of the product* that the reviewer should ideally evaluate behind a *veil of ignorance*, avoiding the influence of any element concerning the author.

It is worth remembering that the VQR 2011-2014 does not aim at evaluating individual scholars, but research outputs of Italian departments and research centres. Bracketing the identity of the authors, as far as possible, is the first requirement entailed by the impartiality principle that internal and external reviewers of the GEV14 ought to follow.

Secondly, impartiality is requested regarding the *approach, the methodology, the style, and the thesis* of the research output. The Reviewer must not assess the research output according to her theoretical, ideal or ideological, preferences but adopting the perspective of the author. From that standpoint, the reviewer must consider if the thesis is clearly expressed, the method is adequate, the argumentation follows, the scholarship is appropriate, and the aim is reasonably achieved. The reviewer ought to bracket her theoretical *bias* and follows the *principle according to which the reader should interpret a text at its best, avoiding the attribution of fallacies, irrationality or falsity to the text when a rational and cogent interpretation is available*. The reviewer ought to reconstruct the author's reasoning and refrains from supporting perspectives and thesis that are closer to her research or disadvantaging those views that are more distant from her work.

This evaluation process must be informed by the principle of the *loyalty to the scientific community*. A flourishing scientific community is supported by good practices, by the ethos and sincere appreciation of good research, not by laws. It is important, in conclusion, that any member of this community (reviewers and evaluated people) is aware that there is no rule, nor priori constraint or formal requirement that can exonerate the reviewer from *the individual responsibility of judgement*. The propriety of a judgement cannot be determined a priori or abstractly defined, but only informed to the professional standards of the community of scholars.

Confidentiality is a necessary and fundamental condition in order to ensure an autonomous and independent judgement. As much as the reviewer ought to exercise an effort of impartiality towards the research output and its author, so her anonymity must be granted. A simple suspicion of the anonymity's violation introduces an element of distortion in the judgement similar to personal connections or theoretical preferences of the reviewer

Confidentiality is required of anyone who is involved in the evaluation process but especially of the GEV14 members who have access to the whole list of reviewers. GEV members and assistant must then to exercise a decisive and clear effort to respect confidentiality.



It is then important to avoid any conflict of interests, thereby GEV14 members will avoid to be, or to select reviewers who are, in a condition of conflict of interests. These conditions concern:

- products reviewers, or GEV14 members, have authored or co-authored;
- products which have been authored or co-authored by reviewers, or GEV14 members, spouses and relatives up to the fourth degree of kinship;
- products submitted by universities where reviewers, or GEV14 members, have been teaching or official associates (even through research centers) since 1/1/2011;
- products submitted by research centers controlled by MIUR or other public and private entities that are voluntarily subjected to the VQR of which they have been employees or official associates (even through research centers) since 1/1/2011.

For the above products there exists a conflict of interest in the following cases:

- a. when the relevant institution has a permanent internal division along a territorial or disciplinary dimension (e.g., a local section of a research center, institute, department), the conflict of interest exists only with respect to the products presented by the same internal unit;
- b. when the relevant institution does not have a permanent internal division along a territorial or disciplinary dimension (e.g., a local section of a research center, institute, department), a conflict of interest exists with respect to the products presented by the institution;
- c. when the internal organization is based on several hierarchical levels (e.g., several institutes within a single department) a conflict of interest emerges at the lowest level (e.g., GEV members who are affiliated with different institutes belonging to the same department have a conflict of interest only with respect to the products presented by authors belonging to the same institute).

In case of conflicts of interest, the GEV Coordinator, or the sub-GEV Coordinator when appropriate, will assign the product to be evaluated to another GEV member for whom no conflict of interest is present.

In case of conflicts of interest involving the GEV Coordinator, the corresponding products will be assigned by the VQR Coordinator or by a person designated by the VQR Coordinator.

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